

## I. Democracy troubles Europe

### Do as you are told

EU officials and their friends in the media are seething after the Greek Cypriots voted down the Annan plan for reunifying Cyprus on Saturday. With their customary swiftness, the media have “changed sides”: whereas it was customary to lambast the Turkish Cypriots - especially their president, Rauf Denktash, who was often portrayed as “a dictator” – now it is the other way around. Media reports have suddenly started to sing the praises of the beleaguered Turkish Cypriots and to criticise the draconian embargo which has been imposed on them since 1974. People are talking openly about the need to make Turkish an official language of the EU, to lift the sanctions on Northern Cyprus, and even to recognise the “Green Line” as a border of the EU, which would be tantamount to de-recognising the (Greek) government of Cyprus as the legitimate government of the whole island, as is currently the case in international law. (Only Turkey recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.) One of the best examples of this sudden volte-face is the attack on the Greek Cypriot President, Tassos Papadopoulos, in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Papadopoulos is described in a headline as “the new Denktash”; as someone who used “dictatorial methods” to campaign for a No vote; and as “a friend of the nationalists in Serbia”. This was always standard-issue Turkish Cypriot propaganda but now suddenly – and for the first time – it is being peddled about the government of a state which will be a member of the EU on Saturday. [“Papadopolos – ein neuer Denktash” in *NZZ*, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2004] According to other sources, there is even talk of recognising the Green Line which divides Cyprus as the new external frontier of the EU, which it undoubtedly is in reality. But such an act would be equivalent to slicing off the territory of a member state, rather like Brussels deciding to recognise Alsace and Lorraine as German territory.

In a statement, the Turkish Cypriot President, Rauf Denktash, said that the EU was complaining that the Greek Cypriots had betrayed it but that he, who knew them very well, would never have expected anything else. Denktash seemed to say that the Greek Cypriot No meant that the island would remain divided. He recalled that all the interested parties in the EU and UN had said that there was no

alternative to the Annan plan. “I am sometimes accused of being ‘out of touch,’” he said, “but it is now quite clear that the people who are ‘out of touch’ are those who pin their hopes on a settlement with the Greek Cypriots. They do not know the Greek Cypriots as I do.” He called for all restrictions against Turkish Cypriots, especially visa restrictions, to be lifted. [*TRNC News*, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

At their meeting, EU foreign ministers decided to reward the Turkish Cypriots with 259 million euros in aid. The consequence of the Greek Cypriot No is that the Turkish Cypriots are now suddenly popular in the EU, whereas before they were very unpopular. It is now expected that the embargo slapped on the Turkish Cypriots will be lifted, at least partially. The ministers expressed their desire to establish direct relations with the Turkish Cypriots. In a communiqué, they said they wanted to “put an end to the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community” – before adding, rather unrealistically, that they still hope to reunify the island by encouraging economic development in the North. The EU said it wanted to send a signal to the North that its future was in a united Cyprus and the EU – although the reunification of the island now seems further away than ever. The Belgian Foreign Minister, Louis Michel, said that the majority of EU foreign ministers had expressed “very harsh” views about the Greek Cypriots. It is clear now that the EU is going to take considerable liberties with its own law, which forbids commercial relations with the TRNC as well as recognition of that territory. Günter Verheugen, the enlargement commissar, made it clear that Brussels intended to bend its own rules to achieve cooperation with the Turkish Cypriots. [Thomas Ferenczi, *Le Monde*, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

### Karabagh issue to be re-opened?

There is some possibility that the result in Cyprus might cause movement in another part of the world, the Caucasus. Since 1992, Turkey has imposed an embargo on Armenia over Nagorno-Karabagh, the autonomous province of Azerbaidjan which fought a war of independence and which is now a self-proclaimed but unrecognised republic. (Turkey’s position on this is exactly the one which is attacks other countries for having over Cyprus, for it accuses Armenia of attacking and invading Azerbaidjan, just as the world accuses it of attacking and invading

Cyprus.) Before the poll on 24<sup>th</sup> April, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, said that his country might recognise the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, if the Greek Cypriots vote against the Annan plan, which now they have done. [*Baku Today*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2004] Now Turkey is planning a three-way summit between itself, Armenia and Azerbaijan at the NATO summit, which is to be held in Istanbul in June. [*Zaman* (Turkey) 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2004] The Foreign Minister of Turkey, Abdullak Gül, invited the Azeri and Armenian foreign ministers to attend, during his recent visit to the Azeri capital, Baku. In Yerevan, the Armenian capital, opposition attempts to overthrow the President are continuing. An American citizen of Armenian origin was arrested during the latest demonstrations. The goal of the opposition is to effect a Georgian-style “roses revolution”, the term used to describe the coup which overthrew Georgian President Edward Shevardnadze last November.

### **Referendum on Constitution – nein Danke!**

The Cyprus result will doubtless confirm the views of those in Germany who think that referendums are a thoroughly bad idea. Commentators agree that there is no chance of Germany holding one on the European Constitution. Who knows how the result would go? The euro, the charter of fundamental rights, now the Constitution – all these are expected to sail by without the German people having had a chance to vote. This is all the more shocking since the red-green coalition in Berlin had promised in its coalition agreement to introduce more plebiscitary elements into German democracy. But there has apparently been what is diplomatically called “an informal agreement” between the Government and the opposition in Germany that it would be inappropriate to extend democracy to the European Constitution. The leader of the Christian Democrats, Angela Merkel, has said that her opposition to a referendum on the Constitution remains unchanged even after Tony Blair’s announcement that he will hold one in Britain, while the Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer has said that a plebiscite would only be a “populist” event which would open the door to “sectarians and trouble-makers”. Only the FDP liberals are in favour. But the German Basic Law forbids national referenda - with one single exception. Article 146 foresees “a free choice of the German people” if, one day, the Basic Law is replaced ... by “a constitution”. [Nikolaus Blome, *Die Welt*, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2004]

### **Political party criminalized in Belgium**

The Court of Appeal in Ghent ruled on 21<sup>st</sup> April that the Flemish secessionist party, the Vlaams Blok,

which was expected to emerge as the biggest single party in the European elections to be held on 13<sup>th</sup> June, is a racist organisation. The Court found the party to be guilty of racism because it proposes to allow immigrants the choice between assimilation and repatriation. It also claims that the electoral material distributed by the local chapters of the party between 1996 and 2000 promoted racism. The Court mentioned especially that the party promotes hate-filled image of foreigners, who are blamed for all the country’s woes. The Court cites VB election material which blamed immigrants for an increase in crime, or which draws attention to the high percentage of immigrants who are in prison. The court has imposed a fine of 12,400 euros each on three organisations affiliated to the Vlaams Blok. A law is now in preparation which would prevent any public money from going to any political parties that “threaten freedom”. [Dirk Vanoverbeke, *Le Soir*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

The Vlaams Blok has appealed against the ruling, and there will be a judicial review by the Court of Cassation in June, after the European elections. Until the ruling is considered by the Court of Cassation, none of the sanctions against the party will take effect. But if it is upheld, as is expected, then the party will effectively be banned, and any association with it will be a criminal offence. It will obviously not receive any state funding, and the Belgian Post will not distribute any of its election material.

Other Flemish political parties have already started to argue over whether the court ruling should have any effect before the Court of Cassation hearing. Some have called on their parties to distance themselves from the VB. Others have attacked the ruling. Professor Matthias Storme, a Flemish secessionist but non-VB member, who is a professor at the University of Leuven, criticised the ruling on the basis of legal arguments. The president of Leuven University has announced sanctions against him for criticising judicial decisions. [*Belga news agency*, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2004] Opinion polls suggest that the conviction of the VB for racism will not affect people’s votes on 13<sup>th</sup> June. [*Gazet van Antwerpen*, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2004] Supporters of the Vlaams Blok are convinced that the conviction will lead to the de facto banning of their party, and that party activists will face prison sentences if they continue to collaborate with it.

### **Does it matter if people vote against the Constitution?**

According to a commentator in the influential German weekly, *Die Zeit*, it does not matter if the British vote against the Constitution. Joachim Fritz-Vannahme draws attention to Article IV-7 of the

draft Constitution which says this: "If, two years after the signature of the treaty amending the Treaty establishing the Constitution, four fifths of the Member States have ratified it and one or more Member States have encountered difficulties in proceeding with ratification, the matter shall be referred to the European Council." [http://european-convention.eu.int/docs/Treaty/cv00850.en03.pdf] (The same article describes the procedure by which the Constitution itself may be amended after its adoption by all member states.) This rather cryptic article does not say what the Council might do but Vannahme suggest that if several states did not ratify the Constitution – six or seven, say – then it would never enter into force. However, if only one or two countries failed to ratify it, and if they were small

countries like Denmark or Estonia, then the EU might just go ahead without them. He does not explain how this could be legally possible, but he does say that it would be politically difficult if a big country like Britain or France rejected it. Vannahme also speculates that a second poll might be held in Britain if the answer is No the first time, and concludes that the British decision considerably increases the pressure on other states, including Germany, to hold a referendum too. [Die Zeit, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2004] Hans-Gert Pöttering, the chairman of the European People's Party, suggested on 20 April that the draft Constitution include a provision that states which do not ratify the text be asked to leave the EU. [Radio Free Europe Newslines, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

## II. Other European News

### Commission might recommend sending blue letter to Italy

A blue letter is the warning issued by the Council of Ministers to a member state if it thinks that its budget is running out of control. It seems likely that Brussels will make this recommendation to the European Council on Wednesday, calling on Rome to cut its budget deficit. Italy is expected to exceed the famous 3% ceiling if measures are not taken: the Italian Government's prediction for 2004 has jumped from 2.2% to 2.8%. [Handelsblatt, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

### Socialist wins Austrian presidency

Dr. Heinz Fischer, a Social Democrat, has won the presidency of Austria, beating the current conservative Foreign Minister, Benita Ferrero-Waldner. Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner remains Foreign Minister. The vote is being interpreted as a reflection of the desire to counterbalance the power of the conservative government with a socialist head of state. But there is also an international dimension to the vote. Dr. Fischer is more closely associated with the traditional Austrian attachment to neutrality, i.e. against joining NATO, while Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner might have been more favourable to it. It seems likely, therefore, that the country will remain outside NATO, even as many of its neighbours join (including Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia) leaving only Switzerland and Austria outside NATO in Central Europe.

### European Parliament corruption row continues

The Austrian MEP, Hans-Peter Martin, remains determined, despite massive hostility from his colleagues, to demonstrate systematic corruption in the European Parliament. He says he plans further

revelations about how his colleagues illegally take money from the institution for which they work. He says he is going to name names and give dates. He has also said that he will hand over a list of the miscreants to Pat Cox, the Parliament's president. Martin says that the German Social Democrats are the worst. "They fly straight home," he said, a reference to the practice of cashing in a *per diem* of 262 euros before leaving the Parliament altogether. Those accused have reacted pompously, saying they are far too busy to waste their time refuting Martin's allegations. They claim, for instance, that the *per diem* is supposed to defray the costs of being in Brussels and Strasbourg, not for actually doing anything. Ever since 2001, there has never been a Friday plenary sitting of the EP in Strasbourg. Yet *per diems* continue to be paid for Friday. Officially, this payment is only for those who cannot get home on Friday night. But about 1 million euros gets paid out regularly for the "Strasbourg Friday". Martin says the numbers would fall drastically if cameras were installed to film people signing on. Martin says that MEPs also sign in on Thursday morning in Brussels before going home for the weekend. He says the total number of cases he has registered is 7,208, making the total real income of MEPs vastly in excess of what it theoretically is. [Manfred Pantförder, Die Welt, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

### Mr. Sarkozy goes to Washington

In an attempt to mend fences with the Americans, the French Finance Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy - who is widely seen as the most powerful minister in the Government, and who makes no secret of his ambition to become President of the Republic in 2007 - has visited Washington DC. After a meeting with Colin Powell, Sarkozy said that relations between the USA and France were improving.

Sarkozy held discussions on the Iraqi debt, after which he said that the French and American positions were close, and also met Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Adviser. He had lunch with the American Jewish Committee, which had awarded him the Simon Wiesenthal Prize in 2003 for his “courage and determination in the fight against anti-Semitism” while he was Minister of the Interior. Sarkozy spoke highly of the integration model known as “the American melting-pot” and compared himself to Arnold Schwarzenegger – not because he is a body-builder but because, like Schwarzenegger, he is of foreign (Hungarian) origin. [*Le Monde, Le Figaro*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

### **Darwin to be removed from Italian curriculum**

The Italian Minister of Education, Letizia Moratti, has defended her decision to remove the teaching of Darwinism from Italian schools, saying that schoolchildren would still have the opportunity to learn about it and discuss it even if it was banished from the obligatory curriculum. There has been an outburst of criticism from Italian scientists and others. [Elena Dusi, *La Repubblica*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

### **Bad news for eurozone**

Two leading German economists have given a gloomy account of the prospects for employment in the eurozone. The presidents of the German Institute of Economics (DIW) and of the Ifo-Institute, Klaus F. Zimmermann and Hans-Werner Sinn, have said that the EU’s job problems will increase with EU enlargement. “We have too few jobs for people without qualifications,” Zimmermann said, “and this problem will be aggravated with the integration of Eastern Europe.” The economists blame excessive social regulation for destroying jobs for the less well qualified. He said that the state would have to cut its social protection in order to create low-paid jobs for the underqualified. [Volker Göttsche, *Handelsblatt*, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2004]

### **Pan-EU funding for political parties planned**

After the June European elections, political parties will not be able to live off their parliamentary groups, who at present provide them with offices, personnel and money. Instead, a system of pan-European party political funding is being introduced. Parties will get funding provided that they have “sufficient” representation across the EU. The new rules, agreed at Nice in 2000 and enshrined in the treaty of Nice, enter into force on 20<sup>th</sup> July, the date of the first plenary session of the new parliament. In order to

qualify for the money, a party must have representation in one quarter of the member states (i.e. in 7 out of 25 countries); it must have MEPs or national deputies or regional councillors. These measures have been attacked by sovereignists like Jens-Peter Bonde, the veteran Danish MEP, and by the French *Front National* and the Italian Radicals under former commissar Emma Bonino. [*Le Monde*, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

### **Finland and Italy introduce last-minute measures to protect labour markets**

Britain and Ireland are the only countries in which citizens of the new member states of the EU will be able to work without restriction, following the introduction in all other states of limitations on foreign workers. Finland and Italy are the last to fall in line. Finland will not give citizens from the “the new Europe” the right work for at least two years, unless it can be shown that the job in question cannot be done satisfactorily by a Finn. Italy has opted for a quota system instead, deciding to limit the number of jobs available to citizens from the new Europe to 20,000. [*Radio Free Europe*, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

### **EU and Russia sign deal**

With the enlargement of the EU to include ten new member states, three of which are former Soviet Republics, the EU and Russia have signed a new cooperation deal. Seven commissars accompanied Romano Prodi to Moscow on 22<sup>nd</sup> April to attend the negotiations. The main areas of discussion were: the transit of merchandise between Kaliningrad, the Russian enclave which lies on the Baltic Sea between Lithuania and Poland, and the rest of Russia; compensation Russia is requesting for the loss of preferential tariffs which it used to enjoy with its Baltic neighbours; and the question of the Russian minorities in the Baltic states. [*Le Monde*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2004]

The agreement has already met with opposition from the EU’s new Baltic members. A former foreign minister of Estonia has said that the agreement with Russia was wrong to contain references to how the Baltic States treat their Russian minorities. An opposition member of the Estonian Parliament went so far as to compare the agreement to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, in whose secret protocol the Baltic States were handed over to the Soviet Union by Hitler in 1939. The Government and other Estonian officials denied, however, that the agreement would give Russia a say in the internal affairs of their countries, or on how they treat their Russian citizens.

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