

I. Euro-elections and the New Europe

Sovereignists expected to do well

In numerous EU countries, EU-critical parties are expected to do well in the European elections. Much has been said about UKIP in Britain; but half of the Polish MEPs may well come from EU-critical parties like Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families. The same is likely to be true of the Czech Republic, where the ODS (Civic Democratic Party) - the party founded by the current Czech President, Václav Klaus, and whose deputy leader, Jan Zahradil, is on the board of the European Foundation - is expected to do well. The current European Parliament has about 60 EU-critical members, divided up between the group led by Jens-Peter Bonde, the Europe of Nations group led by Charles Pasqua, and those who are not in any group. That figure could rise to 100 in these elections. The French National Front might get 10 seats, perhaps picking up some seats from Pasqua and Villiers. If so, the FN might be able to create its own group, perhaps by forming one with the Vlaamsblok and the Austrian Freedom Party, and perhaps the odd Greek, Italian, Slovak, Czech or Slovene. Opinion polls also indicate that the turnout will be very low. [Henri de Bresson & Arnaud Leparmentier, *Le Monde*, 8th June 2004]

Those Polish eurosceptics in full

There are two EU-critical parties in Poland: Self-Defence, led by Andrzej Lepper, the League of Polish Families. There is also the Law and Justice Party, which is sometimes referred to as EU-critical but which is favourable to Polish EU membership. It is expected to join Charles Pasqua's Europe of Nations group: it declined to join the British Conservatives in the European People's Party because it disagrees with that group's German Christian Democrats about their proposal to create a Centre for German Refugees to remember the ethnic cleansing of Germans from Eastern Europe after the war. The Law and Justice leader, Michal Kaminski, is a moderate and an anti-populist. No doubt his party's function is to draw votes away from the more EU-critical parties, by presenting a patriotic appearance while in reality approving of the EU and its works. His party called for Poles to vote Yes to EU membership, and Kaminski says that the EU "is a huge opportunity for Poland". He says that it is wrong to say No to Europe because that would compromise Poland's influence. [Christophe Châtelot, *Le Monde*, 9th June 2004]

Danish and Swedish sovereignists fight Constitution

A group has been created in Sweden modelled on the June Group in Denmark. Its purpose is to unite left- and right-wing critics of the EU and the new Constitution. Hitherto, Swedish Euroscepticism has been expressed in the main political parties, especially the ex-communist Left Party and the Greens, who still want Sweden to leave the EU. Numerous Social Democrats (the party in power in Sweden) are also Eurosceptic. More recently, members of the liberal and conservative parties have also moved towards Eurosceptic positions, and it is therefore from all parts of the political spectrum that the June Movement in Sweden draws its support. But the original Danish June Movement may not do so well. They claim that the media have refused to give them any airtime and that their message has therefore not got through to the voters. But they predict that the Danes will reject the European Constitution, which the Government has said it will submit for ratification by referendum. "All European initiatives are greeted with great scepticism," says Marlene Wind, a researcher on European issues at the University of Copenhagen. [Antoine Jacob, *Le Monde*, 9th June 2004]

Prices rise in Poland thanks to EU

Just before Poland joined the EU, shoppers undertook massive hoarding in order to prepare for the price rises which they knew would occur immediately Poland joined the EU. These price rises are now a reality. Sugar is now 40% more expensive than it was in April. Rice and bananas are 13% to 15% more expensive, and the prices will rise further. Beef and butter have risen by 5%. Even theatre and cinema tickets have become more expensive because VAT has been imposed on them. [Gerhard Gnauck, *Die Welt*, 4th June 2004] Similar price rises have occurred in other EU states. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, for instance, full rates of VAT (c. 20%) have had to be imposed on restaurants and bars, whereas previously it was levied at a fraction of this rate.

Who will be next president of Commission?

Various names are still circulating to replace Romano Prodi as head of the EU executive but no front-runner has yet emerged. The appointment of a new Commission president might therefore have to be put

off. The extraordinary meeting of the European Council on 17th and 18th June is due to discuss the European Constitution, and the Irish presidency does not want that timetable to slip either. The main lines of division are between France and Germany, on the one hand, and Britain on the other; and between the European Council and the European Parliament. Every day a new candidate's name is put forward. On 6th June, the Bavarian government said that Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder had agreed on the name of the prime minister of Bavaria, Edmund Stoiber, but that he had rejected the offer. Then Paris and Berlin were said to be pushing for the candidacy of Guy Verhofstadt, the Prime Minister of Belgium. Tony Blair is strongly against this idea. He resents Verhofstadt's role in organising the Franco-German-Belgian-Luxembourg anti-war summit in 2002. In the pages of the *Financial Times* other names have started to be floated, such as that of the Portuguese commissar, Antonio Vitorino, and Chris Patten. Javier Solana, the present High Representative, has also been mooted. The French have set their conditions: the candidate must be francophone, and must be from a country which participates in all EU policies. This rules out British, Irish, Danish and Swedish candidates. The Austrian Chancellor is out of the running because he formed a government with Jörg Haider. Solana is not wanted in Paris because he is thought not to be up to the task, and because people don't know with whom to replace him. With the Luxembourg Prime Minister, Jean-Claude Juncker, having turned down the job, the only candidate left is Verhofstadt. Paris is reminding everyone that the president of the Commission is elected by qualified majority – a way of reminding London that it does not have a veto, such as it used in 1995 to prevent another Belgian prime minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene, from getting the job. But people other than the British oppose Verhofstadt: he wants the size of the Commission to be reduced and the smaller countries who fear their influence will be squeezed oppose this. Verhofstadt is also likely to lose his national elections on 13th June. Finally, the Belgian premier is strongly opposed by the Christian Democrats in the European Parliament, which has to approve the appointment. Hans-Gert Pöttering, the leader of the European People's Party faction in the Parliament, has rejected Verhofstadt as vehemently as has Daniel Cohn-Bendit, for whom he is too free-market. People say that the European Parliament could well reject the appointee, not least in order to strengthen its own powers. [Arnaud Leparmentier, *Le Monde*, 8th June 2004]

In an interview, Pöttering said that he does not want to see a repeat of 1999, when the Right won

the European elections but had Romano Prodi, a left-winger, imposed as Commission president. He says that the majority of the Commission is now socialist or social democrat even though the Right is dominant in the Parliament. Pöttering is especially hostile with Verhofstadt because he joined in with the boycott of Austria in February 2000 and because he aligned himself with Chirac and Schröder against the Iraq war: this, Pöttering says, divided Europe. He is also among those politicians who reject most strongly any reference to God in the Constitution.

Pöttering also commented on the presence of the British Conservatives within the federalist EPP. He said that the EPP had been keen to keep them within the federalist movement so as not to have "a party to the right of us which would exert a force of attraction on others". [Henri de Bresson & Arnaud Leparmentier, *Le Monde*, 8th June 2004]

According to other reports, the Belgian Prime Minister Verhofstadt is the most likely person to succeed Romano Prodi as president of the Commission. The Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern is travelling around European capitals to lobby for Verhofstadt. Sources in Luxembourg have told *Die Welt* that Verhofstadt's is the only name which Ahern is discussing. [*Die Welt*, 5th June 2004]

D-Day for Schröder

The warm embrace between Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder at the D-Day celebrations has been widely interpreted as an important historical and political statement. It is the first time that a German Chancellor has attended the D-Day celebrations, that honour having been denied to Chancellor Kohl when he asked to attend the 50th anniversary memorial. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* called the event "The Chancellor's D-Day" [7 June 2004]. The Germans are now going around saying that they regard D-Day as their own liberation from Hitler. On the other hand, at least one historian has rejected any comparison between this and the war in Iraq. Heinrich-August Winkler, professor of history at the Humboldt University in Berlin, said that the key difference was that, unlike Germany under Hitler, Iraq had no prior tradition of democracy. It has also been noted that Chancellor Schröder carefully avoided any mention of the Americans in his speech, referring instead only to "the Allies". Chirac has started to talk about Schröder not as his "friend" but as his "brother", to underline the key importance of the Franco-German axis. The Chancellor was attacked by some members of the conservative opposition for failing to visit the graveyard at Cambe where some 21,000 German soldiers are buried. But he did lay a wreath at the cemetery in Ranville where soldiers from some eight countries are buried, including Germans. [*L'Libération*, 7th

II. NATO extends influence into the Middle East and Black Sea

NATO to expand into Greater Middle East

The next NATO summit, to be held in Istanbul on 28th – 29th June is expected to begin a process by which the alliance's reach will be extended even further, following the admission in 2002 of ten new member states in Central and Eastern Europe. Now the focus is on the Middle East. [<http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/home.htm>]

Some NATO insiders have been floating the idea that it is time for the Alliance to embrace the concept of the Greater Middle East. An article published in NATO's own journal, for instance, suggests that the Middle East should be NATO's new "central front". Will Marshall of the Democratic Leadership Committee in Washington DC writes in "NATO International" that the "Greater Middle East is to the 21st century what Europe was to the 20th century – the world's prime crucible of conflict." For Marshall, the Greater Middle East extends from Morocco to Pakistan and is, in fact, effectively a euphemism for "the Muslim world" (with the exception of Indonesia and Malaysia). Marshall argues that NATO needs to define a new "mission" or else its member states will drift apart politically. "I think the answer is pretty straightforward," Marshall writes, "NATO should be rededicated to defending our common security interests and liberal values against the new totalitarianism brewing in the Greater Middle East." The author says that this is substantially the same idea as that advanced by both George W. Bush and John Kerry, as well as by the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer. Marshall even coins the expression "the transatlantic homeland" to emphasise that NATO's new mission is comparable to that of a domestic police force. "In fact," he writes, "in organising the 6,500-strong International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, NATO has already crossed the Rubicon and begun its strategic reorientation toward the Greater Middle East." Marshall is a supporter of pre-emptive strikes: "And yes," he writes, "NATO should develop the capacities that will allow it to strike pre-emptively at nuclear facilities in countries that flout international non-proliferation norms." He also thinks that NATO can effectively govern other countries. "NATO could take a more active part in stemming conflicts and reinforcing political settlements in the region (i.e. the Greater Middle East). It could provide security guarantees to facilitate a negotiated, two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A

new Palestinian state would need help in disarming Hamas and other terrorist groups, while Israel would need reassurance that it would not have to bear the burden of protecting its citizens alone." ["Should the Middle East be NATO's new central front?" by Will Marshall, *NATO International*, Spring 2004, <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue1/english/debate.html>]

Similar views, albeit with a different geographical focus, have been expressed by two other NATO insiders, Ronald Asmus, Senior Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and Bruce P. Jackson, formerly of Lockheed Martin, now president of the Project on transnational Democracies and president of the US Committee on NATO. The authors call for NATO to expand into the Black Sea region, integrating all the states on the Black Sea, plus the Caucasus states of Armenia and Azerbaijan, into its orbit. The authors write, "In referring to the region" (i.e. the Black Sea region) "we implicitly refer to the Euro-Asian corridor linking the Euro-Atlantic system with Caspian energy supplies and the states of Central Asia." They also say that the "Black Sea" should extend "northward from Transdnistria, Odessa and Sukhumi", three places where there are historic Russian bases. The authors say that the strategic reason for advancing into the "Black Sea region" is in order to stabilise the "Greater Middle East". They add, coyly, "Subsidiary but still important strategic consideration pertains to European access to energy supplies." They claim – without evidence – that the territories where there are unresolved conflicts in the Black Sea region (Transdnistria, Nagorno-Karabagh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia) are used for trafficking and terrorism. They say that, given the new threats from the Greater Middle East, the Black Sea region "begins to look like a core component of the West's strategic hinterland." The authors also say that the purpose of extending into the Black Sea is to hasten "the democratisation of the Russian state". ["The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom," *Policy Review*, June & July 2004]

NATO and Ukraine sign deal

Representatives of NATO and Ukraine have signed an agreement, called "Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Airlift", which gives NATO the right to use six freight-carrying Ukrainian An-124 aircraft and one An-225 plane for moving alliance troops and equipment to zones of conflict. The agreement, signed between the general secretary of NATO, Jaan de Hoop Scheffer, and the Ukrainian

Defence Minister Evgeny Marchuk, complements an earlier agreement which allows NATO troops to enter Ukrainian territory. [*Rosbalt News*, 8th June 2004; for earlier agreement, see *Russian Information Agency (Novosti)* April 7, 2004] The NATO Secretary-General used the occasion to call for more democratic reform in Ukraine. Western governments have long maintained an ambivalent relationship with the Ukrainian President, Leonid Kuchma, whom they basically tolerate but whom they would also like to remove. [*Radio Free Europe Newslines*, 8th June 2004]

Georgia may move against South Ossetia

Following the successful operation against the elected leader of the Autonomous Region of Adjara, Aslan Abashidze, the Georgian Government is now apparently moving against one of its secessionist territories, South Ossetia. The commander-in-chief of the Georgian armed forces, Gigi Iukuridze, has said that his country could use force to restore the territorial integrity of the state, from which Abkhazia and South Ossetia seceded in 1992. "Georgia's Armed Forces should be ready to tackle the tasks of restoring the country's territorial integrity," Iukuridze said. "Today's reality requires us to return Tskhinvali and the territory surrounding it. And in the future we will have to face a bigger challenge - Abkhazia. God willing, it will all be resolved peacefully." [*Interfax*, 4th June, 2004] The Abkhaz authorities have denounced the build-up of troops near South Ossetia, pointing out that the Georgian special forces have been trained by the Americans. [*Georgian Daily Times*, 4th June 2004] Abkhazia has said that it will back South Ossetia with military equipment and force if Georgia attacks the province. The Georgian Foreign Minister has been in Washington discussing these questions with Colin Powell, and she said after her meeting that they had also discussed the related issue of Russian bases in the country, which the US wants to see closed. [*Civil Georgia*, 2nd June 2004]

President Putin's envoy for the Caucasus, Vladimir Yakovlev, has attacked Georgia's "sabre-rattling" over South Ossetia and said that the use of force will not settle the issue. The committee within the State Duma (national parliament) in Moscow with responsibility for relations with former Soviet republics is also alarmed. Deputies are to hold a meeting behind closed doors on the South Ossetian issue on 10th June. The Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, is expected to address the meeting. Andrei Kokoshin, the committee's head, said, "We shall take stock of the entire range of South Caucasian security issues." The newly elected Parliament of South Ossetia has issued an appeal to Russia to defend Russian citizens living in the

breakaway region. The Parliament also called on Russia to recognise South Ossetia as an independent state. The ruling party there, Unity, wants South Ossetia to join the Russian federation. [*Civil Georgia*, 8th June 2004] Meanwhile, in Adjara, the new Georgian authorities have set about arresting people associated with the former president of the region, Aslan Abashidze. These include members of his family. [*Georgian Daily Times*, 8th June 2004] In Georgia itself, the arrival of power in November 2003 of President Saakashvili has led to mass arrests, often televised, in the name of an "anti-corruption campaign."

Kurds renounce ceasefire

After a ceasefire of almost five years, the PKK's successor organisation, Kongra-Gel (Kurdish People's Congress) has said that it will resume its attacks against tourists in Eastern Turkey. The stated end of the ceasefire was on 1st June. A statement on the website of a pro-Kurdish news agency said that tourists should not go to Turkey and that people should not invest in the country. The Kurdish forces said that they would begin "various activities" against the Turkish security forces. Since 1999 some 500 PKK people have been killed. In the 15 years between 1984 and the ceasefire in 1999, some 37,000 people were killed in total. The ceasefire was proclaimed in 1999 when the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, was captured. Some 5,000 Kurdish fighters withdrew to Northern Iraq. In April 2002 the party changed its name to Kadek before becoming Kongra-Gel in November 2003. [<http://www.kongra-gel.com>] Ankara says that hundreds of PKK fighters have returned to Turkey from Northern Iraq in recent months.

Case against Paksas to begin in July

The impeached former President of Lithuania is now facing criminal prosecution for allegedly leaking a state secret. The secret in question was that the secret services were wiretapping the phone of an associate of Paksas, Yuri Borisov. Although the former President was impeached on this charge, no evidence was produced to support it during the hearings into the matter in the Lithuanian Parliament, which culminated in Paksas' impeachment on 6th April. But impeachment, it seems, is not enough and now a criminal trial is pending too. Because the trial involves state secrets, it is to be held in secret. If found guilty, Paksas could be imprisoned for two years. As it is, the Lithuanian Parliament and Constitutional Court have already used retroactive legislation to prevent him from ever holding elected office again in his life. [*Baltic Times*, 4th June 2004]

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