

## I. Europe and America

### Internationalist greetings

The European Union and the United Nations were among the first organisations to send their congratulations to George W. Bush. The president in office of the European Union, the Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, underlined in his presidential communiqué the “strength” of the links between the EU and the USA. He said that the EU was “looking forward to continuing its productive relations with the Bush administration”. “The USA and the EU have strong cultural, political and economic ties, and they share the same values. They are natural and indispensable partners.” The president of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, expressed to Mr. Bush his “warm congratulations” and spoke of the “bonds of friendship and cooperation” between Europe and America. He said that these were “vital for the maintenance of peace in the world, on the basis of values shared multilaterally”. The Secretary-General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, also congratulated the American President on his re-election. “I have no doubt,” he said, “that President Bush will continue with the long tradition of the US of a solid engagement within NATO, the essential bridge between the USA and Europe.” Kofi Annan also sent his warm congratulations and said that he was determined to continue working together with Mr. Bush.

The German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, also congratulated George Bush on his re-election and expressed the hope that they would be able to face “together” the things which threatened the security and the stability of the world. The Polish president, Alexander Kwasniewski, said that it would be best for Poland to continue working with President Bush. The Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi spoke of the necessity of “renewing the transatlantic spirit”. The Czech President, Václav Klaus, said something about “the continuity of American policy” while the Czech Foreign Minister, Cyril Svoboda, said obsequiously that Bush’s victory was “good news for the Czech Republic.” The French President, Jacques Chirac, congratulated Mr. Bush and said that he hoped his second term would provide an opportunity “to strengthen Franco-American friendship” and the transatlantic

partnership. The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, did not even wait for the official confirmation of the results before expressing his “joy” that the American people had not allowed themselves to be “frightened” and that they had made “the right decision”. The Spanish Government, which recently withdrew its troops from Iraq, expressed its willingness to pursue “effective and constructive cooperation” with Washington. “Relations must be closer and more solid between the EU and the USA in order to build an international order which has extremely important challenges before it.” The Norwegian Prime Minister, Kjell Magne Bondevik, said that tensions had arisen between Europe and America under Bush and expressed the hope that these would now ease. [Stefan Rousseau, *Agence France Presse*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004]

### A godless Europe?

According to one school of thought within British Euroscepticism, the EU is the work of Catholic Christian Democrats who want to re-establish the Holy Roman Empire. The signature of the new European Constitution in Rome at the weekend may have nourished this idea, especially since it took place underneath a statue of Pope Innocent X holding up his arm in blessing. But the Constitution is itself rigorously secular, all reference to God (and still less Christianity) having been removed, leaving only the values of humanism and the Enlightenment. And the Buttiglione affair, in which a personal friend of the Pope was expelled from the EU Commission for his Catholic views, has finally shown that the EU is instead now dominated by people who find some of the moral tenets of Catholicism shocking. The controversial Italian commissar announced his resignation on Saturday, saying that he was happy to suffer for his values and quoting the French anthropologist René Girard: “Human communities are periodically shaken by an irresistible act of purification by choosing from within their ranks an innocent victim on to which to project their own faults and infamies.” Buttiglione added that he was leaving in order to make the work of the Barroso Commission easier, and he said that he wished it well. In an interview with *La Repubblica*, Buttiglione denounced what he called “a very fashionable anti-Christian prejudice”. The president of the Italian

Senate, Marcello Pera, agreed, saying, “This Europe has no soul. Only Christianity can give it one” – even though Pera is attached to the principle of secularism. At his Angelus address on Sunday in St. Peter’s Square, Pope John Paul II alluded to the Buttiglione affair when he said that the Holy See had always

supported the unification of Europe but that it hoped that Christians would be able to bring the message of the gospels into its instances. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/angelus/2004/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_ang\\_20041031\\_it.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/angelus/2004/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_20041031_it.html); Jean-Jacques Bozonnet, *Le Monde*, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2004]

## II. Other European News

### Commission’s troubles not over

However, no soon had Mr. Buttiglione fallen on his sword than the Latvian commissar, Ingrida Urde, announced her resignation too. She had not been the initial choice of the Latvian government and her appointment was controversial in Riga, where she was attacked as “a Eurosceptic.” So the new supposedly right-wing European Parliament has got rid of one Catholic conservative and one Eurosceptic. Other unpopular commissars are the Dutch woman, Nellie Kroes, who is disliked by both the European People’s Party and the Socialists, and the Hungarian László Kovács. [Thomas Ferenczi, *Le Monde*, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2004]

It seems likely that the current Italian foreign minister, Franco Frattini, will replace Mr. Buttiglione. At least, people are saying in Rome that Frattini thinks the job is his for the taking. Apparently Frattini said this to his Italian ministerial colleagues on a recent flight to Moscow. According to the same rumours, Berlusconi is keeping mum for the time being about the appointment because it will require him to reshuffle his cabinet and that is itself a delicate task. Other names being mooted include those of Mario Monti, who was competition commissar in the last Commission; Letizia Moratti, the current education minister; and the former commissar, Emma Bonino. If Frattini is appointed, it seems that Gianfranco Fini, the current Deputy Prime Minister, would become Foreign Minister in his place.

One interesting aspect of the new Commission is that eight *chefs de cabinet* and deputy *chefs de cabinet* will be Germans. Six further candidate commissars have Germans in their cabinets. This means that Germany will have a much better representation than in the Prodi Commission. The German Government sees this as a success for its policy of getting more Germans into international organisations. Since 1999 the percentage of Germans in such bodies has risen from 8.6% to 9.5%. Since 2001, more than 20% of the jobs in the EU have gone to Germans. Berlin insists that this policy does not aim at creating a “German U-Boot” in the Commission for the purpose of encouraging certain policies. [*Handelsblatt*, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2004]

### Europe prepares to help in Iraq

The EU is likely to help finance the occupation of Iraq. Paris, Berlin and Madrid have refused to send troops to the country but the EU foreign ministers are trying to reach a common position on aid. The Dutch Foreign Minister, Bernard Bot, said, “Europe’s participation in Iraq is very important.” It seems probable that the EU will give Iraq money for its elections. The Iraqi Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, is to meet the 25 EU Foreign Ministers on Friday, shortly after a visit to the NATO HQ in Brussels. It is expected that the EU will pony up about €30 million. It is also expected to give substantial financing to the United Nations protection force. The EU is expected to send a “panel of experts” to Iraq to see how the EU can assist Iraq, after the elections, to set up an administrative and police system. The EU is also looking at a commercial agreement with Iraq. The US is expected to try to continue to persuade NATO member states to agree to sending a NATO mission but France, Germany and Spain continue to oppose this. The US is likely to try to present a NATO mission as part of the war on terror. [Alexandrine Bouilhet, *Le Figaro*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004]

### EU wants to continue to negotiate with Iran

The EU foreign ministers are intending to continue their negotiations with Iran over its nuclear power programme and to reach an agreement by the end of the month. The EU Council President, the Dutch Foreign Minister, Bernard Bot, has said that he hopes the government in Tehran will send out different signals from the parliament: on Sunday, Iranian deputies voted a law shouting “Death to America” and “Allahu akhbar”, the purpose of the law being to require the government to continue the atomic energy programme. Iran’s President, Mohammed Khatami said that he was optimistic that the disagreement with the US on the nuclear programme could be solved. The US accuses Iran of trying to build nuclear weapons. The German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, has said that the discussions with Tehran are very difficult. Khatami has said that if the EU respects Iran’s right to use atomic energy for peaceful purposes, then Iran was ready to guarantee that it was not seeking nuclear weapons. Iran might even be ready to freeze its programme of enriching uranium. EU

representatives and Iranian officials are to meet again on Friday: the EU has set a deadline for the end to the uranium enrichment programme, the end of the month. It has said that if Iran does not respect this deadline, then it will join the USA in taking the issue to the Security Council of the United Nations. [*Handelsblatt*, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2004]

### **Phone tapping to be increased in Germany**

The German Interior Minister, Otto Schily, wants to strengthen the anti-terrorism powers of the Federal Criminal Office (BKA) and allow it to tap telephones. Schily said, "The current rules do not allow the BKA to take any preventive measures against danger. This is a weakness which is no longer acceptable. Schily was addressing the BKA's 50<sup>th</sup> autumn conference, which was devoted to the theme "Networks of terror – networks against terror". Schily said that the BKA needed to be able to tap phones for the fight against terrorism and organised crime. It should also be able to conduct searches, check people's identity, and interrogate people. But this will require a change in the German Constitution, which decentralises such powers to the police forces of the German *Länder*. An opposition deputy said that it would be impossible for Schily to introduce these changes, because the coalition would not permit it. Naturally the head of the BKA agreed with the proposal to increase its powers, even though he admitted that the danger of terrorism was smaller in Germany than in the USA, Israel or in the United Kingdom. [Martin Lutz, *Die Welt*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004]

### **Rise in Euro business confidence – and inflation**

Despite the sharp increase in oil prices, surveys show that business confidence is rising in the eurozone. Consumer confidence, however, has fallen. Inflation has risen to 2.5%, as against 2.1% in September. This is a cause for concern because the European Central Bank is supposed to be keeping inflation just below 2%. The figure is also greater than the 2.2% which most analysts predicted. On the other hand, economists say that it is mainly due to the rise in oil prices. [*Les Echos*, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2004]

### **Ukrainian opposition cries foul**

In keeping with its pre-election propaganda, supporters of the Ukrainian opposition candidate Victor Yushchenko, have alleged fraud in the presidential election the first round of which was held on 31 October. These allegations have been recycled as truth by most of the Western media, who are happy to be spoon-fed information by English-speaking political activists posing as neutral guardians of Ukrainian democracy. The findings of Russian observers who gave chapter and verse on the fraud they observed in the Western Ukraine, where the

opposition candidate achieved heroic scores of just under 90%, went unreported. [[www.oscewatch.org](http://www.oscewatch.org)]

### **Berlin wants to abolish day of German unity**

In its drive to increase tax revenue, the German Government wants to abolish the holiday on 3<sup>rd</sup> October which commemorates the reunification of West and East Germany. It intends instead to celebrate the occasion on the first Sunday in October, i.e. without a holiday. This is one part of the "savings package" which the Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and the Finance Minister Hans Eichel have agreed with the Employment Minister Wolfgang Clement. The attempt is to bring Germany's finances under control in 2005 and to get the budget deficit back down under 3% of GDP. Because of the continued weak state of the economy, the Government's revenues are 5 billion euros lower than it was estimated they would be in May. Expenditure is also higher because of high unemployment payments. So the government has to find some €7 billion. It wants to remove various tax breaks, for instance for commuters. Abolishing one holiday will, the Government says, raise growth by 0.1%. Subsidies for coal are to be cut from €2.1 billion to €1.6 billion. But the biggest savings are supposed to come from a deal with the German Post Office and Deutsche Telekom, which will henceforth have to pay the pensions of their former employees. [Cornelia Wolber, *Die Welt*, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2004]

### **Hungary announces withdrawal from Iraq**

The new Prime Minister of Hungary, the former Komsomolchik Ferenc Gyurcsany, has announced that the 300 Hungarian soldiers in Iraq will be withdrawn by March 2005. "It is our duty to stay there until the elections," he said, "but it will be impossible to stay much longer than that." The mandate of the Hungarian soldiers in fact expires in December. Budapest said that it would announce its decision after the US elections, and so it has done. The conservative opposition has repeatedly called for the troops to be withdrawn: the Iraq war, and Hungary's participation in the occupation, are extremely unpopular. The Dutch Government has said it will send a contingent of 1,350 soldiers to Iraq. The Hague has said that this will be the last contribution it makes to post-war Iraq. [*Le Figaro*, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2004]

### **Governor of Sicily accused of Mafia links**

Toto Cuffaro, 46, elected in July 2001 on the Berlusconi ticket to the post of President of the region of Sicily, has been accused of complicity with Cosa Nostra, the Sicilian Mafia. His trial, and that of twelve others, will start next February. He has said

that he will demonstrate his complete innocence. "Who knows me knows that I am an enemy of the Mafia and of all Mafiosi." According to the charges, Cuffaro told the Mafia boss in Palermo that he was under judicial investigation. His defenders say that it is significant that he has been accused of "connivance" and not for "violation of the secrecy of enquiry". [Richard Heuzé, *Le Figaro*, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2004]

### **Romania wants to join EU quickly**

The Romanian Prime minister, Adrian Nastase, has said that he wants to do everything to make sure that his country is admitted to the EU by 2007. Speaking at a German-Romanian investment conference in Essen, which was also attended by the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, Nastase said, "The coming months are a great opportunity for us." Schröder said that he supported Romania's strategy. [*Handelsblatt*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004]

### **Turkey planning to invade Iraq**

According to Turkish media reports, 40,000 Turkish soldiers are standing ready to invade Northern Iraq to prevent the Kurds from obtaining control of the oil fields at Kirkuk. It is said they could march within 18 hours of an order being given. The Government has not commented on these reports, but the deputy head of the Turkish army, Ilker Basbug, said on Tuesday that Kirkuk provided 12% of Iraq's oil income and that "to hand over the control of this to one group might start a civil war." He said it would be "naïve to think that Turkey will not be concerned by this". He said that Kirkuk had to have a special status which would allow all Iraqis a share in the oil income. Control of the oil would, Turks fear, provide the financial basis for the creation of a Kurdish state. [Gerd Höhler, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004]

### **Gül tours Europe**

The Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gül, secured Portugal's backing yesterday during his visit to Lisbon as part of Ankara's lobbying efforts to get the green light on opening accession talks when the EU leaders meet in December. Gül met Portuguese officials, including his counterpart, Antonio Monteiro, and Parliament Speaker Mota Amaral in Lisbon, as well as the Portuguese President, Jorge Sampaio, and the new Prime Minister, Santana Lopes. Gül is later to travel to Brussels where he will attend a briefing on Friday by the Netherlands for candidate countries. In his talks with Monteiro, Gül discussed, in addition to Turkey's EU bid, Turkish-Portuguese ties, the Cyprus

dispute, Iraq and the Middle East peace process. Ankara says an October recommendation by the European Commission for the opening of talks with Turkey proved that it had met EU standards. Turkey also received the support of a committee in the Hungarian Parliament. The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Zsolt Nemeth, speaking during the visit of the Turkey-Hungary Parliamentary Friendship Group to the Hungarian Parliament, said Turkey should become an EU member and the Hungarian Parliament would support it all the way. [*Turkish Daily News*, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2004]

### **Italians like Spaniards best**

Two Italians out of three consider that European unification is "a good thing", while only 7% consider it "a bad thing". The remaining 17% express no opinion. Two Italians out of three say they are "proud" to be Europeans, some even saying that they think of themselves more as Europeans than as Italian citizens. The Spaniards are the people in which the Italians put their greatest trust – above even the Italians themselves. The Italians trust the British less than they trust the Swedes, the Germans, the Dutch, the French, the Danes, the Finns, the Irish, the Belgians, the Portuguese, the Luxembourgers and the Austrians, but more than they trust the Greeks, the Maltese and the rest of the Eastern Europeans. Bottom of the list, below Romanians, come Turks and Bulgarians. [Renato Mannheimer, *Corriere della sera*, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2004]

### **Northern League against European Constitution**

In a cabinet meeting, the three ministers from the Northern League in the Italian Government, including Roberto Castelli, the Minister of Justice, have voted against the law providing for ratification of the European Constitution. Castelli said that his party would also vote against the Constitution in Parliament. But he said that the opposition was more about method than substance. Silvio Berlusconi announced at the signing ceremony on 29<sup>th</sup> October that the Italian Council of Ministers would vote on the new treaty the same afternoon, "the first in Europe". The motion voted in the Council of Ministers will enable the treaty to be submitted to Parliament. Berlusconi said that the League's vote was predictable and that, in any case, the Constitution would be supported by a large majority in the Italian Parliament. [*Corriere della sera*, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2004]