

## I. Will the French vote 'No'?

### Eurosceptics are optimistic

Like one swallow, the recent sight of a small French van in the streets of central London sporting a "*Non à l'euro-constitution!*" sticker does not itself herald a Eurosceptic summer. But French opponents of the European Constitution have a spring in their step. Many think there is a distinct chance that France will vote down the European Constitution on 29 May. If they did, it would surely be a fatal blow to that text: a 'No' vote by any other country, including Britain, could perhaps be sidestepped, but not one by France. Jacques Myard, the Gaullist Deputy, is one man who thinks that the 'No' camp has a very good chance. He points out that there is a genuine malaise in France, and he is encouraged by the clear position taken against the Treaty by the Socialists Laurent Fabius and Henri Emmanuelli, respectively former Prime Minister and President of the National Assembly.

Predictably, rows have broken out between the 'Yes' and 'No' camps within the Socialist Party. In a television interview, Henri Emmanuelli said that the majority was not always right: he pointed out that a majority of Socialist Deputies had voted for the war in Algeria, and for transferring full powers to Marshal Pétain in 1940. This gave rise to squeals of protest from the Yes camp, which accused Emmanuelli of likening them to collaborators. (He has rejected this charge as baseless.) [*Agence France Presse*, 14 March 2005]

*Les souverainistes* have already held their first big meeting. Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, president of the campaign group, *Debout la République* ("Let the Republic Stand Up") told a meeting on 9 March that, "We say 'No' to France becoming a vassal in an empire of merchants; 'No' to a France who resigns today in order to vanish tomorrow ... As ever when it is a question of doing down France, the foreigners' party is at work with its peaceful and reassuring voice. French people – do not listen! It is the drowsiness which precedes death."

Many of the right-wing *souverainistes* are having fun at Jacques Chirac's expense. When Mayor of Paris, Chirac issued a famously rousing and nationalist anti-EU statement from his hospital bed (he had been injured in an accident) and *l'appel de Cochin* is still fondly remembered. There has been little sign of that Chirac for years now. He said that it would be "bloody stupid" (*une connerie*) if France

voted down the Constitution, which has led various people to say that Chirac's own position would be untenable if the 'No' camp wins on 29 May. "How could Chirac be the president of a majority of bloody stupid gits (*le président d'une majorité de cons?*)?" asks Gilles Bourdouleix, a dissident member of the Chiracian UMP Party. [Christiane Chombeau, *Le Monde*, 11 March 2005]

The Socialist pro-Europeans have also held a meeting – in the Theatre of the European in Paris. Their 300 activists were fewer in number than those who attended the 'No' rally. The speakers all competed with one another to produce an exciting adjective to describe their own "oui": "fervent", "deafening", "responsible" and so on. One speaker, of North African origin, said that he was "comfortable in my trainers" (*à l'aise dans mes baskets*). This got a big round of applause, presumably because the old political hacks thought it was hip. The Socialists are especially vulnerable because their supporters will wonder why they are being asked to vote for Chirac for the second time in a couple of years. The Socialists voted for the President against Jean-Marie Le Pen in the second round of the presidential elections in 2002.

Opinion polls show that the 'No' camp is still only on 40 per cent, in contrast to 60 per cent for the 'Yes', but also that it has risen dramatically (by 5 per cent) as the campaign gets under way.

### Chirac tells Commission to shut up

In a desperate bid to stem the rising tide of opposition to the services directive (which would allow a Polish plumber to work in France according to Polish law, not French), President Chirac has once again asked the President of the European Commission to abandon his plans. The Commission is seen in France as the promoter of "ultra-liberalism" and this "Bolkestein directive" is seen as something which will abolish France's social legislation at a stroke. But even supporters of the European Constitution have asked the Brussels Commissars to be more discrete, since they are so unpopular and will only make a 'No' result more likely on 29 May. Mr Chirac was particularly incensed to hear Danuta Hübner, the Polish Commissar and a lifelong communist, say that it was important "to facilitate *délocalisations* in Europe". (*Délocalisation* means the

closure of a company in a country with high wage costs and its removal to one where wage costs are lower.) Chirac is said to be exasperated that the Commission does not realise how difficult the campaign is going to be in France. The French President argues that the proposed directive is in contradiction with the EU's tradition, which is to harmonise rules and not to allow the country of origin's rules to prevail (this latter practice used to be known as the *Cassis de Dijon* principle, whereby a product recognised in one country should be recognised across the EU). The Commission's spokesman has tried to smooth things over by pretending that some kind of solution will be found, but the Commission President, José Barroso, has said that he absolutely refuses to abandon the country of origin principle. But Mr Barroso is not the only Commissar whose words are causing an outrage in France. Vladimir Spidla has said that, "our objective is above all flexibility"; Nellie Kroes has said that the EU must abolish its regional aid package; Peter Mandelson has said that the labour market and the system of social protection must be reformed. All these are red rags to public opinion in France. [Philippe Le Cœur, Thomas Ferenczi, *Le Monde*, 17 March 2005]

The row is likely to continue when Mr Barroso addresses the French National Assembly. He will do so, on his own invitation. The Bolkestein directive is so unpopular the Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, has promised to oppose it tooth and claw. Barroso seemed to be stirring things up when he said, "Some people seem to think that the Commission's role is to protect the fifteen old member states from the ten new ones. They are wrong." His hard line is in contrast to the emollient position adopted earlier by the Commission, and it has given rise to a rather improbable and self-serving conspiracy theory among some French pro-Europeans that the "ultra-liberals" (i.e. Barroso and those who want the service directive) are secretly trying to sabotage the Constitution. [Patrick Roger, *Le Monde*, 16 March 2005]

The level of concern is so great that the President of the French National Assembly has asked the German Bundestag to ratify the European Constitution before the French referendum. The Germans have obliged and will ratify the text on 12 May. [*Handelsblatt*, 9 March 2005]

## II. Other European News

### Turkey in the dog-house

Within weeks of the EU's decision to admit Turkey, the country is in the doghouse. An EU delegation to Ankara coincided with a demonstration during which women were beaten by the Turkish police. This has caused self-righteous outrage among the Eurocrats who have turned against Turkey and are accused of backsliding. They seem not to remember that Swedish police shot three protesters at the EU summit in Göteborg in June 2001; that Danish police opened fire on anti-EU demonstrators in the streets of Copenhagen in 1993; that British police beat pro-hunt demonstrators in Parliament Square last year; or that Italian police killed an anti-globalisation protester in Genoa in 2001.

Martin Schulz, the leader of the Social Democrats in the European Parliament, has attacked Turkey for making insufficient progress towards democratisation. He said that Ankara would have to make up its mind whether it was fighting Islamic fundamentalism or not. He said it was not enough just to sign bits of paper. Schulz criticised in particular a newspaper called *Anadoluda Vakit*, which has been forbidden in Germany because it is judged anti-Semitic. "The question is, what does a moderate Islamic government have to say about the Islamist organisation which runs this paper," Schulz thundered. He presumably wants the organisation and its newspaper to be closed down, which is an odd

way of promoting democracy. [*Handelsblatt*, 12 March 2005]

### Genoa prosecutor reports on 2001 police violence

The Italian authorities have submitted a report which accuses forty-seven police officers, doctors and members of the penitentiary system of committing numerous violations of human rights during the demonstrations against the G8 summit in July 2001. The 500 page document reports threats of rape, the beating of demonstrators, and demonstrators being forced to stand naked and adopt humiliating positions. These abuses occurred in a barracks near Genoa where the heads of state and government of the G8 countries were meeting at the time. 255 demonstrators were taken there after a hundred were rounded up in the night of 21-22 July. Fifteen police officers are now facing prosecution, including the then Deputy Prefect of Genoa, Alessandro Perugini. Sixteen members of the penitentiary service are also being prosecuted, including two generals, a colonel and two captains. Eleven Carabinieri and five doctors, including three women, are also accused. [*Le Monde*, 13 March 2005]

### Warsaw condemns Moscow's "political mistake"

Sparks have been flying between Moscow and Warsaw over a statement by the Polish Foreign Minister, Adam Daniel Rotfeld, that Russia had

committed a “political mistake” by killing the Chechen leader, Aslan Maskhadov. Rotfeld had also said that Maskhadov was the only person with whom a dialogue had been possible, and that those who killed him were determined to kill off the chance of any negotiated settlement in Chechnya. The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying, “Moscow does not understand, and is stupefied by, the comments of the Polish Foreign Minister... Maskhadov had on his hands the blood of thousands of Russians, including children.” Russia asked rhetorically whether Poland would also express regret over the death of Shamil Basayev, the man accused of masterminding the Beslan massacre of schoolchildren, or Osama bin Laden: Moscow always tries to present its battle in Chechnya as part of the war on terror. This cold air between the two countries was worsened when the Russian army refused to hand over documents relative to the Katyn massacre. So bad, indeed, are relations, that for a while it was in doubt whether the Polish President, Alexander Kwasniewski, would attend the celebrations in Moscow in May to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Although the Lithuanian and Estonian presidents have already said they will not attend, Kawsniewski has said he will go. [Christophe Châtelot, *Le Monde*, 16 March 2005]

### **Kosovo premier in the dock**

Ramush Haradinaj, 36, also known as “Smile”, the former Prime Minister of Kosovo and a former commander in the Kosovo Liberation Army, appeared at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia on Monday, charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes and other violations of the laws of war. The previous week, he had resigned as head of the Kosovo Government, having earlier denied that there was any indictment against him at all [see last *Digest*, Issue No. 209]. Haradinaj is charged together with two associates. According to the indictment, finally published by the ICTY [<http://www.un.org/icty/indictment/english/har-ii050224e.htm>], his second-in-command committed a particularly sadistic murder: three men were captured; one of them had his nose cut off; wounds were then slashed into their arms, necks and thighs; salt was rubbed into the wounds; the wounds were then sewn up again with a needle; they were wrapped in barbed wire; an implement was used to drive the barbed wire into their flesh; and one of them was stabbed in the eye. Hardinaj denies all charges.

### **Brave New World**

The German Interior Minister, Otto Schily, and the Minister of Justice, Brigitte Zypries, are negotiating

with German telecommunications companies for all records of phone calls to be kept for one year. They are doing this because an EU directive requires telecommunication companies to store records of all communications (including phone calls, mobile phone calls, text messages, e-mails and Internet transmissions) to be stored for up to three years. This directive was introduced after the Madrid bombings in 2004. Although the content of the communications is apparently not going to be stored, the records will nonetheless mean an unprecedented surveillance of the movements and activities of 400 million EU citizens. There has been some opposition to this in the European Parliament and in the German Bundestag. The telecommunication companies are not exactly thrilled either; they know that the new requirements will be very expensive for them. The Federation of German Industry (BDI) has pointed out that if these plans were introduced, the amount of data that would have to be stored would be equivalent to four kilometres of shelves of files. In the light of this, the BDI has said that it is doubtful whether it will even be possible to have any meaningful access to such a huge amount of data. [Andreas Middel, *Die Welt*, 14 March 2005]

### **Haider returns to the helm**

Jörg Haider, the former leader of the Austrian Freedom Party and the current Governor of Carinthia, has said that he wants to take over control again of the Party. He resigned in 2000 following pressure from the European Union, when the Freedom Party entered a coalition with the Christian Democrat Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP). The party has not fared well since it joined the Government, and has fallen victim to internal divisions and high-level defections. Since July Haider’s sister, Ursula Haubner, who is Minister for Social Affairs, has led the Party. Haider is notoriously mercurial; he said only last week that he thought the Freedom Party should be dissolved and a new party created. A special Party congress is to be held at the end of April. [*Die Welt*, 14 March 2005]

### **Churches for sale in Germany**

A falling population and consequently falling tax revenues have plunged the Lutheran Church in Germany into such a financial crisis that it is going to sell off thousands of churches and chapels. Nearly 10,000, indeed, are no longer needed for religious services, which is just under half of the total number. In East Germany, half of the churches and chapels have been superfluous for a long time. In Hamburg only 34 per cent of the population is registered as belonging to a church (German law requires everyone to belong to a church, and the state raises taxes on

behalf of the churches; citizens must formally announce that they do not belong to a church in order to be exempt.) As a result, church income has fallen by 40 per cent in ten years. The buildings will be sold off for “social purposes”. The situation in the Catholic Church is little better. The number of parishes in Berlin is to be halved, from 207 to 110. To deal with the crisis, the Churches have called in management consultants, who not surprisingly have recommended staff cuts. McKinsey has told the diocese of Berlin to sack 300 people and to sell off what property it can. It is not clear, however, who will want to buy these buildings: unlike in Holland, supermarket chains and discotheques have not yet come forward as potential buyers. The Lutheran Church has also said that if churches are not listed, then they can be simply torn down. [Dankwart Guratzsch, *Die Welt*, 14 March 2005]

### **Battle over EU diplomatic service**

Even though the European Constitution has not been ratified, an inter-institutional row has broken out about how to organise the EU diplomatic service, which will run the EU foreign policy. The Constitution provides for an EU Foreign Minister to be elected by qualified majority by the European Council. Javier Solana is likely to take over the new post when it is created. The confusion arises, though, from the fact that the new Foreign Minister will report both to the Council of Ministers and to the Commission. The diplomatic service over which he will preside will be drawn from the staffs of the Commission, the Council and the Member States, and it is here that the battle is raging. A report has been drawn up and a decision is to be taken in mid-June, and the issue is whether this new institution will be part of the Commission, the Council, or neither. The Commission does not want to lose its present powers over foreign commercial relations, humanitarian aid, development, and enlargement. The new military powers of the EU, however, will come under the aegis of the new service. [Thomas Ferenczi, *Le Monde*, 12 March 2005]

### **National debate over crisis in Greek Church**

Following the indictment of the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Corinth for stealing €300,000 over the last ten years, which in turns comes after months of sexual and financial scandal within the Greek Church, a national debate has started about the role of the church in society and politics. The Church has tried to make a *mea culpa* and has called for a process of ‘catharsis’ but the socialist party, Pasok, has said that it is time properly to separate the church from the

state. The Church is resisting this, claiming that it is part of a campaign to secularise Greek society and to introduce things like gay marriage. [Didier Kunz, *Le Monde*, 16 March 2005]

### **Croatia sent to the back of the class**

Croatia was due to open accession negotiations with the EU on 17 March. But the decision has been delayed following the negative opinion given by the Chief Prosecutor at the The Hague tribunal, Carla del Ponte. The EU has said that accession negotiations will not start until General Ante Gotovina is turned over to the ICTY. Zagreb says it does not know where he is; it protests that an arrest warrant has been issued and that a massive police search has been underway for years. Many in Croatia feel victimised because Gotovina, who was in the French Foreign Legion for 20 years, has French nationality. Why should Croatia carry the can for him, they ask? Although the vote against Croatia was not unanimous – Austria, Slovenia, Hungary and Slovakia voted in favour – no date has been given for accession negotiations to start. The decision is a blow for the Government led by Ivo Sanader whom, like the ex-communist opposition, is a strong supporter of EU accession. Croatia had hoped to join the EU in 2009. [*Le Monde*, *Die Welt*, 16 March 2005]

### **Old Europe**

Although unemployment in Germany has hit 5 million, the employment and social affairs Commissar, Vladimir Spidla, has said that the EU is short of labour. “Between now and 2050 we will need 20 million employees,” he says. In two generations the number of people over 80 will rise by 180 per cent, and that of people aged between 65 and 79 by 44 per cent. By contrast, the number of people aged between 25 and 39 will drop by 62 per cent. Spidla says that to reverse the demographic decline there would have to be a birth rate of 2.1 children per woman: not one single EU state fulfils this criterion. Only Ireland (2), France (1.9) and the Scandinavian countries (1.7) come anywhere near this: Germany, Spain and Italy are way behind with 1.3. Spidla has said that EU states need to change their social policies in order to encourage people to have more children, but he has also said that the EU must also increase immigration. [Michael Scheerer, *Handelsblatt*, 16 March 2005]

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