

'DIABOLIC ATTACK AGAINST CIVILISED WORLD'

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Bringing a death toll of over 5,000 people, terrorists on 11/09 crashed two hijacked airliners into the World Trade Center in New York, completely demolishing the twin 110-story towers. A third hijacked aircraft crashed into the Pentagon, and a fourth - possibly heading for the White House - crashlanded near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The outrages evoked Europe-wide solidarity with the United States. Hans-Gert POETTERING, leader of the EPP-ED Group in the European Parliament, spoke for many when he talked of a "diabolic attack not only on the US but against the entire civilised world." Investigators appear near-certain that the terrorists belong to the sinister network controlled by Osama BIN LADEN, the fugitive Saudi-born millionaire and Islamic revolutionary, who is one of the main advisers to the fundamentalist Taliban régime in Afghanistan. This week the world was on tenterhooks as it awaited President George W BUSH's promised retaliation, possibly the bombing of Kabul. There were also significant US military manoeuvres elsewhere. In an interview with EPP News, President Wilfried MARTENS puts the unprecedented events into perspective. ALSO in EPP News: Success for EPP parties in Norwegian elections + In Britain, the Conservatives choose a new leader.

EPP News: *The first shock of these events is over. How do you see things now?*

Wilfried Martens: Still utterly unbelievable. What most moved me was the stoicism of the people of New York, and their marvellous solidarity. There was no sense of panic, nor of a wild desire for revenge - which I must say would have been understandable.



EPPN: *But President BUSH is promising exactly that - revenge. And for Europe the immediate point is surely the application of Article 5 of the NATO Treaty - 'an attack on one is an attack on all'?*

WM: We cannot and must not waver in our support for the US, and I conveyed exactly that message in a personal message to President Bush. Our parties remain, as we always have been, absolutely committed to resist terrorism of any kind. Wherever it is.

EPPN: *But does that in practice mean giving President Bush carte blanche to retaliate however - and against anyone - he pleases? And our being obliged to join in? Can you imagine, 10 years on, that European troops might be bogged down in some hopeless invasion of Afghanistan? That seems to be the fate of every army which tries to intervene there. The British empire, the Soviet Union...*



WM: Bringing Bin Laden to justice, if possible, seems to me inevitable, and politically unavoidable. But it will very difficult. It is no secret that huge efforts were deployed by Bill CLINTON to do this after the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. George Bush [pictured left] knows that too. I am personally sceptical about the chances of his being arrested or killed soon. But it has to be said that the police investigation has been extraordinarily effective. The assassins were identified within 24 hours. That gives me hope that the 'war' which President Bush speaks about will be very exact, targeted.

EPPN: *After all, this is an enemy which is not an army but an elusive network of religiously-inspired angry men, led by someone who happens to have at least 300m \$ and close connections to pariah governments like the Taliban. How can you fight that?*

WM: Partly by making clear, as Bush has done, that a government which shelters such people, or colludes with terrorism, will not be safe from military action. The EU must endorse that stand. But over the distance the solution must also be a matter of dealing with the injustices which give rise to terrorism...

EPPN: *Which it could be argued is to reward terrorism...*

WM: I would strongly disagree with that. The situation in the Middle East, which may or may not be at the root of all this, is profoundly unstable. It is dangerous not just to the region, but to the whole world. Why? Because the Palestinians have no perspective. That is how terrorism is born - out of anger and hopelessness. Nor, in truth, can the Israelis expect to 'win' a war against them. They have to learn to live together. That means a political solution. And it places a great onus on us Europeans, I think, to stop expecting the Americans invariably to take the leading role in these situations, and then to criticise them. The EU has become in some ways very inward-looking. We are a super-power and must take the responsibilities that that implies. Which in turn means, as the Americans say - and have long urged us - to 'get our act together' over Common Foreign and Security Policy.

EPPN: *Which would solve the problem?*

WM: Few problems have complete solutions. There may well be an irreducible number of people on the planet who are simply evil, and need to be contained. But I refuse to believe there are very many of them. As I explained, the main impression I have had over these last days has been how good and self-sacrificing people can be.

EPPN: *But this irreducible minimum....?*

WM: Will alas always be with us. Globalisation, air travel, the Internet, vast sums of money of the kind Mr Bin Laden apparently has, modern weapons, all give

such people new and terrible possibilities. But the point is that they depend, for mass support, for suicide bombers, on a reservoir of hopelessness. So it is not only a matter of human justice, but of simple common sense, for us to try to make life better for the dispossessed in the world.



EPPN: *Which is easily said...*

WM: And of course very difficult. Plus it takes time. But it is essential. It means devoting far more political will in Europe - and in the US - to very knotty issues like the Middle East. But I do not see any choice.

EPPN: *Do you see a danger of revenge attacks, and of growing tensions between Europeans and Muslims?*

WM: Yes, but I am glad to say less than a few days ago. People are much more sane than is usually supposed. As one Muslim leader after another has made clear, the Koran, like the Bible, forbids murder. In Islam, life is the greatest gift of God. In this case, as with the suicide bombers in Israel, Islam has been distorted - like Christianity in the past - to justify the unjustifiable. It is grotesque for terrorists to promise these young men they will go to heaven for killing other human beings! But this is not Islam.

EPPN: *Many people believe it is.*

WM: There are good grounds for educating people properly about this religion: there are now very many Muslims in Europe, as in the US. It would be absurd for them to be held collectively blamed for the killings in America. But insofar as we in Europe have our own reservoir of hopelessness, of people on the margins - Muslims or Christians or no religion - we need to deal with that too. The EPP parties are as firmly opposed to terrorism as we are to social marginalisation. And without in any way condoning terrorism, of course there is a connection between the two.

The outrages in the US had a particular echo in Spain, where the campaign of violence by the Basque separatist ETA organisation continues - and over the summer began targeting tourist resorts. Spanish EPP Secretary-General Alejandro AGAG expressed the party's "deep sympathy with the victims of these terrorists atrocities, their families and friends, and the administration of the United States...These are the most direct attacks on democracy and the rule of law. Terrorist organisations do not live in isolation. They are inextricably interlinked and Europe is as much affected by these events as our friends across the Atlantic ocean."

ALSO...

Other news around the world has been overshadowed by events in the US. **Norway's** ruling Labour Party saw its share of the vote collapse from 35% to 24% in the 10/09 elections. The EPP party Høyre increased its share from 14% to 21%. Either Høyre leader Jan PETERSEN, or the Christian Democrats' Kjell Magne BONDEVIK - prime minister until 1997 - is likely to lead a new coalition of centre-right, right, and liberal parties when parliament returns in October. But such a government would need the support of the right-wing Progressives, led by the maverick Carl I. HAGEN, who wants both lower taxes and big spending on welfare, especially pensioners.

The issue of whether or not to join the EU, which split the country in 1994, was marginal in the campaign: support for the eurosceptic Centre Party slumped to just 6%.

In Britain, the EPP's alliance partners in the European Parliament, the British Conservatives, elected Iain DUNCAN SMITH (*right*) leader of the party. In the first-ever leadership contest decided by party members, Duncan Smith beat former Chancellor (Finance Minister) and pro-European Ken CLARKE with 155,933 votes (61%) against Clarke's 100,864 (39%). He appointed David DAVIS party chairman.



In his victory speech, Duncan Smith, 47, known until now mainly as one of the most committed 'Maastricht rebels' during John MAJOR's administration, avoided any mention of the divisive European issue. The Conservatives, he said "will campaign on the issues that matter to people...that obsess them. These must become the things that obsess us: the state of their public services, health, welfare, education and the environment."

In his letter of congratulations, President Martens recalled his negotiations with former party leader Chris PATTEN which brought the Tories into the EPP parliamentary group. "With some hardly surprising hiccoughs, this 10-year-old alliance has been remarkably dynamic and successful. We have progressively opened out both the group and the party to major political forces such as Forza Italia...In December we will also be joined by Jacques Chirac's RPR Gaullist party. I believe strongly that, if we are correct the imbalance in European politics, and to present a common front against the terrible, and growing, problem of political terrorism, the centrists need to unite as strongly as possible. The unspeakable outrages in New York and Washington have perhaps brought that into sharper focus than ever."