

MERKEL'S SPARKY NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL

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German CDU leader Angela MERKEL has appointed a new Secretary-General + RUGOVA wins in Kosovo + More ETA bombings

German CDU leader Angela MERKEL has proposed a new Secretary-General to be appointed at the CDU Congress in November 20. Laurenz MEYER, 52, will succeed Ruprecht POLENZ, 54, who said last week: "I'm more of a bridge builder, less of a spearhead." Meyer, by contrast, said that he would be taking on the Social Democratic-Green opposition "with a sabre rather than a foil," if that proved necessary.



Vice-President of the North Rhine- Westphalia Landtag and a senior manager with an electricity company, Meyer (above with Mrs Merkel) told a Berlin press conference that he saw himself as bringing the spirit of the grassroots to his new job. CDU members, he said, were glad to see clear discussions about policies, but "don't want confused talk from the leaders."

In particular there was need for a clear line on the controversial issue of immigration, he said. The CDU would win the arguments if voters saw it as competent in economic and social issues, he said.

The party needed to find a different language to speak to people.

CDI party triumph in Kosovo



Moderate leader Ibrahim RUGOVA, leader of the CDI member party Democratic League of Kosovo (SDA), swept the board in Kosovo's first free elections on 28/10. Rugova - whose platform is cooperation across the ethnic divides - won overwhelmingly in most of Kosovo's 30 municipalities.

The election of a man long written-off by the international community vindicates Rugova's lonely resistance both to Slobodan MILOSEVIC and to the racketeering and violence which have plagued the region.

The OSCE, which organised and ran the municipal elections, said that the Democratic League had won 58% of the vote, with Rugova's main rival, former guerrilla commander Hashim THACI far behind on 27%. Kosovo's c. 75,000 remaining Serbs boycotted the vote.

ETA claims more victims

An ETA car bomb exploded during the morning rush-hour on 30/10 in the busy Arturo Soria area of Madrid, killing a senior magistrate, Judge Jose Francisco QUEROL, 69, his bodyguard and driver, and injuring at least 30 others. A bus was sent on fire, along with dozens of cars, and the facades of nearby buildings destroyed. The death-toll from the Basque separatist murder campaign now stands at 19 since it ended the ceasefire in December in 1999.