

# TOWARDS A "UNION OF VALUES"

*Brussels, July 7, 2000*

The *XIV EPP Congress document* is now in its final draft stage. Discussion of the c 15-page paper has shown a remarkable degree of consensus on how to remain true to the ideals on which the party was founded while robustly confronting the challenges of the 21st century. + As noted in *last week's newsletter*, French President Jacques CHIRAC's proposals for a long-term, radical re-think of the European project have raised fears of delaying EU enlargement, and his essentially intergovernmental approach has provoked some sharp reactions. + In Austria, Chancellor Wolfgang SCHÜSSEL has decided to hold a *non-binding referendum* unless sanctions by the other 14 Member States are lifted. + Sofia's plans for a *Balkan police academy*.

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The XIV Berlin Congress will debate a document which seeks to square the circle of maintaining traditional values in a dynamic, fast-changing society. It also confronts the changes within the party as it has expanded to include other, non-Christian Democratic traditions.

As President MARTENS told last month's Fourth Dialogue of the EPP-ED parliamentary group with Orthodox leaders in Istanbul: "We are at the moment engaged in debating who we are... Sometimes these debates are necessary, if only to restate truths which should never have been in doubt."

The name of the Congress document, 'A Union of Values', was no coincidence: "That is ultimately what the EPP is, or should be," he said. "And what the European Union is, or should be. Without firm, Christian-inspired values the European Union is ... just an arrangement. The same goes for the EPP."

The document's opening paragraph states boldly: "The 21st century offers Europe the chance to build a European Union worthy of the name - a Europe that is whole, free and prosperous. The human person must and will be at the very centre of our politics." Far from turning its back on modernity, the Union of Values sees in technical progress the possibility for a better and fairer society, asserting: "The great goal of full employment is now within our grasp, and is the best guarantee of social cohesion." While rejecting pure economic liberalism, the EPP is keen to learn from the experiences of others. For instance, Chapter III on the Information Age argues that "the success of the new high-tech economy depends on low telecommunications costs, as in the US. High costs in Europe are a result of inadequate competition, on which the EU should intervene. The target should be to achieve open cost-free access to the Net as soon as possible."

At the same time, the paper is wary of the dangers posed by advances in bio-technology. It is above all guided by the principle of the inviolable dignity of the human person. Its six chapters include positions on European identity, and foreign and security policy.



## EUROPE - THE GREAT DEBATE CONTINUES



French President Jacques CHIRAC's speech to the German Bundestag (see last week's EPP News) provoked some sharp rejoinders - including from two Commissioners close to the EPP - about the prospect of a more intergovernmental Europe. Confronting opposition to his ideas at home as well as abroad, and fears of an endless debate over a European constitution which would delay enlargement, Chirac - pictured left with German Chancellor SCHRÖDER) said this week: "When you want to show the way ahead, you have to light up the road." He made it clear that his Berlin ideas were not part of France's six-month EU presidency.

But, responding to Chirac at the European Parliament plenary in Strasbourg, Commission President Romano PRODI defended the EU's current institutions, which he said needed to be strengthened. The step-by-step approach to integration based on the EU institutions - called the "Monnet method" after Jean MONNET - remained preferable and more effective than what he called ad hoc arrangements. "They provide the guarantees, the checks and balances, without which nothing lasting will be built," he said.



Separately, two Commissioners made sharp comments on the Chirac proposals. Michel BARNIER (F) (pictured right), responsible for regional policy, also criticised the tendency of the Council of Ministers to boost its powers at the expense of the institutions. Writing in the Milan daily *Corriere Della Sera*, Mario MONTI (left), the Commissioner responsible for competition policy, urged Italy to resist the French idea of a "pioneer" group, which would "put (Italy) out of the game". He warned that the proposed "concert of nations" would



not be based on "community rules overseen by the Commission and the Court of Justice with respect to all states, whether powerful or not."

Despite reassuring noises from President Chirac last week, there remains alarm among many existing as well as applicant EU countries at the prospect of a two-tier Europe - two different classes of European - with the top tier dominated by France and Germany. "We don't want to be part of a Europe dominated by a Franco-German directorate," said Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang SCHÜSSEL. Europe should rather be "a balanced partnership of equals."

Some applicant states feel that the goalposts are being moved, and also that the enlargement decided at Helsinki risks being badly delayed, not just by France's call for a debate on a European constitution, but by Germany Chancellor Gerhard SCHRÖDER's promise of a wide-ranging Intergovernmental Conference in 2003 - 4 to allay the fears of the powerful Länder about losing power to the European institutions.

On a visit to Rome, Hungarian Prime Minister Victor ORBAN voiced "apprehension" over "sometimes contradictory" statements from EU leaders on enlargement. The Hungarians pressed Italy to support a clear timetable and entry-date by the end of the French presidency. In Poland, which hopes to join the EU by January 2003, EU integration minister Jacek SARIUSZ-WOLSKI said membership negotiations had slowed down, in part because of the decision to begin talks with all applicant states at the same time.

Poland's entry into the EU was essentially "a political decision" which should not be delayed for technical or economic reasons, he argued. But Bruno DETHOMAS, EU ambassador to Poland, riposted: "If it was purely a political process then Poland would

already be a member of the EU." He denied there had been any slowdown in talks, which he said had "entered a new phase".

## **AUSTRIA TO HOLD POLL ON SANCTIONS**

The Austrian People's Party-led government in Vienna has decided to hold a six-question 'non-binding referendum' (Volksbefragung) either in October or November if diplomatic sanctions against Austria are not lifted by the time of the Biarritz Summit in three months' time. EPP President Martens commented that the EPP report on the People's Party - Freedom Party coalition had initially called for the referendum to be cancelled.



"This part of the report was struck out by the EPP political bureau because it was felt wrong to try to dictate to the Austrian government what it should do.," he said. "However, I remain concerned - as do many EPP parties - that such an exercise risks giving Mr Haider (de facto leader of the Freedom Party) a fresh platform, without moving the problem of sanctions closer to a resolution." He added that the EU Committee of Wise Men was the model the EPP had advised, "and will I am sure come to the same conclusions as we did."

## **SOFIA'S POLICE ACADEMY**

Police are the missing link in international peacekeeping operations. In Kosovo, Bernard KOUCHNER, head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has long complained that he has less than half the contingent of 4,700 police he was promised.

Against that background, Bulgaria on July 4 proposed setting up an international academy in Sofia to train police specifically for peacekeeping in the Balkans. Vassilyi TAKEV, deputy foreign minister in the Union of Democratic Forces-run government, said the centre would operate within the Balkans Stability Pact. "Interest in it is immense," he said. "This would be the first centre for training multinational police forces." The hq of a seven-nation Balkan peacekeeping force is in Bulgaria's second-largest city, Plovdiv. It is hoped the academy will be set up early next year.