



PROPHETIC TIMES

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SOLANA TO PUSH FOR EU FOREIGN MINISTER JOB

May 13, 2004 Euobserver reported: 'According to French daily Le Monde, Javier Solana, the EU's high representative for foreign policy, wants the job of European foreign minister - a post foreseen in the European Constitution. The paper quotes sources saying that Mr Solana will push for his post to be "boosted" at a meeting of EU heads of state and government on 17 and 18 June.

In other words, he would like the European foreign minister position to be brought forward and come into force before the whole Constitution is put into place - something not likely to happen before 2006. The post would combine Mr Solana's role with that of the Commissioner for external relations - currently held by the UK's Chris Patten.

The EU foreign minister would be responsible for handling the EU's external relations - and would also be vice-president of the European Commission. The person would also eventually have an "external action service" or a diplomatic service to provide back-up.

If Mr Solana did secure the post, it would mean the end of compatriot Joaquin Almunia, who recently replaced Pedro Solbes as commissioner for economic and monetary affairs. The big countries will lose their second commissioner in the next college.

However, the Spaniard may not be the only one interested in the job. A wave of speculation in German media last year, which has since died down, said that German foreign minister Joschka Fischer was also keen on position.'

PERSSON: THE EU NEEDS FURTHER ENLARGEMENT

May 12, 2004 The Euobserver reported: 'Swedish prime minister Göran Persson has said that Romania, Turkey and other countries need to join the EU to boost growth.

Speaking at a conference in Bucharest yesterday (11 May), Mr Persson said he envisaged a Union of more than 30 member states and that there is no way of saying no to Turkey, if the country fulfills the criteria for membership. And he added that the EU needs further enlargement with countries like Romania, which can muster growth rates of 6-7 percent per year.

"In trade policies a future power troika of the US, China and India is emerging. If the EU is to play at the same level, growth is needed", he said, according to Svenska Dagbladet. If it is not able to create this growth, huge problems will lie ahead, Mr Persson warned, saying, "we might manage for one year, perhaps five years, but not for ten".

In his speech, Mr Persson also predicted that trade and diplomacy will overtake military muscle as the most important asset for gaining international influence. Military strength has held the predominant influence in world politics and the situation in Iraq has shown that it is no longer functioning.

Whilst he believes that military alliances such as NATO will lose influence, trade organisations such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will gain.'

BUSH READY TO ANNOUNCE SYRIAN SANCTIONS

May 11, 2004 The Middle East Newswire reported: 'President George Bush plans to announce U.S. sanctions against Syria over the next 24 hours.

Congressional sources said Bush has relayed to House and Senate leaders his plans to imminently announce sanctions against Syria under the Syrian Accountability Act. The sources said the sanctions to be announced would not cover the range of options provided under the legislation, signed into law by Bush in December 2003.

"It could be announced on either Tuesday or Wednesday," a congressional aide said.

Bush was expected to announce the following sanctions, the sources said: a ban on Syrian passenger flights to the United States, a prohibition on U.S. energy investments in Syria, a ban on U.S. exports to Syria, with the exception of humanitarian goods. The law requires Bush to choose two of six economic or political sanctions options.'

CHINA INCREASES AID TO SYRIAN MISSILES

May 12, 2004 The Middle East Newslite reported: 'China has increased assistance to Syria's medium-range missile program.'

Western diplomatic sources said Beijing has sent several delegations and technicians to accelerate Syria's program for extended-range Scud missiles. The sources said the increased aid was first detected in late 2003 in what they termed a major development.

"The Chinese effort is meant to provide Syria with technical assistance that it has not been able to receive from other countries," a diplomatic source said. "The focus is to extend the Scud from short-range to medium- and even intermediate-range."

The sources said the Chinese assistance appears to be replacing that of North Korea, which was the prime supplier to and developer of Syria's missile programs. Pyongyang supplied and helped develop the Scud C and Scud D programs.'

POPE SAYS ENLARGED EU NEEDS CHRISTIANITY

May 2, 2004 Reuters reported: 'Pope John Paul Sunday welcomed the 10 new nations of the European Union but said the bloc could only face the challenges of the 21st century if it defended its Christian roots. The pope, whose native country, Poland, is one of the new countries in the 25-strong EU, told a packed St Peter's Square Europe's identity would be "incomprehensible" without Christianity.'

"Only a Europe that does not remove, but rediscovers its Christian roots will reach the stature needed for the great challenges of the third millennium: peace, dialogue between cultures and religions, the safeguarding of creation," he said.

He has repeatedly called for bloc to enshrine Christianity in its constitution, but this has been resisted by secular politicians. EU leaders are also aware of the risk of offending Turkey, a secular state but with a largely Muslim population, which wants to join the EU.

Earlier, in a sign of his growing concern with the secularization of society, the pope warned 26 new priests it would be hard to convince people God was still important in a materialistic world.

"You are becoming priests in an age in which, even here in Rome, strong cultural tendencies seem to want to cause people to forget God, in particular the young and families," he said, speaking in the relatively clear voice. The leader of the world's one billion Roman Catholics, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, appeared in better form than on many previous occasions.

Last year his aides had cut secondary engagements such as ordinations from his schedule. But Sunday, the pontiff led the ordination mass, seated in a throne on wheels. At the start of his noon address in St Peter's Square, he unusually raised his voice and banged his hand twice on the lectern to gain attention. In another sign of the pope's improved health, he is expected to travel to Switzerland in June and to the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes in August.'

ISRAELI DM WARNS HEZBOLLAH ATTACKS WILL BE 'CATASTROPHIC FOR SYRIA AND LEBANON'

May 9, 2004 The Voice of America reported: 'Israel is warning that it would strike government targets in Syria and Lebanon if these countries do not restrain the militant Islamic group Hezbollah. The warning follows recent violence between Hezbollah and Israeli troops on the border with Lebanon.'



Israel's deputy defense minister, Ze'ev Boim, warns that if Hezbollah continues to escalate violence along the Israeli border with Lebanon, then the fighting will spread to other parts of Lebanon and Syria. His comments follow reaction to the killing last week of one Israeli soldier and the wounding of six others in attacks by the Hezbollah, which is based in southern Lebanon.

Mr. Boim says it is clear that Israel is not only dealing with the Hezbollah, which is listed by the State Department as a terrorist organization. He says Syria is supplying the militant group with money and weapons, and is the main power broker in Lebanon, controlling activities inside that country.

Mr. Boim says that if Hezbollah is allowed to continue attacking Israel then it will be, in his words, catastrophic for Syria and Lebanon...'