

# Sinn Fein sceptical of Clinton diplomacy

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, DEC. 4. Amid the media build-up over the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton's visit to Northern Ireland next week, Sinn Fein sources told *The Hindu* today that they did not expect any "major breakthrough" in the stalled peace process. They said the Sinn Fein would put across its arguments before him "forcefully" and leave him to draw his own conclusions.

In fact, the view in Sinn Fein circles was that it was going to be no more than a "farewell" visit. A Sinn Fein official said the U.S. President had made "quite a large contribution" to the peace process and clearly he was anxious to see it moving before laying down his office next month. He

dismissed reports that Mr. Clinton was likely to pressure the Sinn Fein on the issue of arms decommissioning by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) which the Unionists see as the main roadblock to peace. "President Clinton has always been even-handed and we don't think that he is going to take sides," he said.

According to indications, Mr. Clinton is not carrying any firm proposals and basically he will be "talking and listening" to various viewpoints. Though officially the date of his visit has not been announced, he is likely to spend just one day in Belfast — probably December 13. He is also expected to visit Ireland which is becoming increasingly impatient with the sit-

uation north of its border. The Irish Prime Minister, Mr. Bertie Ahern has been trying to get both the Ulster Unionists and the Sinn Fein to resolve their differences but in recent weeks things have got even worse, particularly after the Ulster Unionist leader, Mr. David Trimble's decision to bar Sinn Fein Ministers from attending meetings of cross-border bodies unless there is progress on arms decommissioning.

Even as Mr. George Mitchell, the former U.S. Senator who played a key role in facilitating the Good Friday agreement, said on Sunday that Mr. Clinton would try and do his best to break the deadlock, the mood among the "combatants" was far from optimistic as both sides tried to blame the other for the slow progress in implementing the agreement. Sinn Fein is expected to make it clear to Mr. Clinton that it is not happy with the British Government's handling of the situation. It accuses Westminster of making promises and then breaking them — the latest being the new policing arrangement for Northern Ireland which, according to the Sinn Fein, falls short of the Patten Commission's recommendations.

"The British Government cannot go on breaking promises and then blame us for the stalemate," a Sinn Fein spokesman said. The outcome of Mr. Clinton's visit, he said, would depend on the attitude of the Unionists and the British Government.

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NORTHERN IRELAND / SECRET TALKS PAY OFF

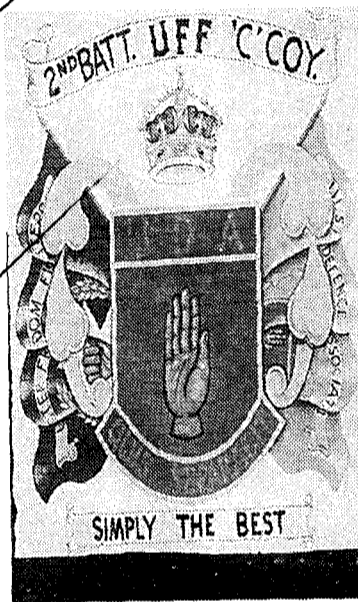
# Loyalist groups agree to cease fire

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, DEC. 16. In a positive development, but unrelated to the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton's visit, rival Protestant paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland have agreed to put an end to the recent wave of violence which has claimed seven lives and driven hundreds of families out of their homes in recent months. The agreement, which was widely welcomed as a step towards peace, follows protracted secret talks even as reprisal killings continued.

The Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association, the two main groups, said in a statement on Friday that they were committing themselves to "an open-ended and all-encompassing cessation of hostilities". "We fully recognise the pain and suffering that has been inflicted on our community and we resolve that under no circumstances will such events be repeated," they said distancing themselves from the activities of the dissident loyalist outfits. There was, however, some uncertainty about the reaction of the Ulster Freedom Fighters whose chief Johnny Adair is serving a jail sentence. He was due for early release in August but the British Government blocked it because of his alleged involvement in triggering the intra-loyalist feud.

While the UFF is affiliated to one of the signatories to the agreement, Mr. Adair apparently was not engaged in the peace talks which led to the accord and there was no certainty that he would be willing to be bound by it. The Northern Ireland Secretary,



Loyalist murals in Belfast seen ahead of the recent visit of the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, to the province. — Reuters

Mr. Peter Mandelson thanked the unnamed interlocutors who "worked so hard" to bring about the agreement. He said he knew from his "extensive contacts" that these groups wanted peace and he was glad that it had become possible. Mr. Mandelson who has his hands full with the fallout of the differences over the Good Friday Agreement has come in for criticism by the Sinn Fein for his alleged pro-Unionist tilt which, of course, he has denied.

Yesterday's agreement has been described as a Christmas "gift" to the harassed residents of the Shankill Road, the main theatre of loyalist violence, but given the fragile political climate of Belfast the big question on everyone's mind is: will the agreement hold, and for how long? A Sinn Fein spokesman called it a "positive" development but said it was important to remember that the agreement did not include all loyalist groups.

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## Fresh crisis hits Ulster peace

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, DEC. 28. Within weeks of the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton's much publicised peace mission to Northern Ireland, a fresh threat to the Good Friday Agreement is looming over the issue of arms decommissioning by the Irish Republic Army, the paramilitary wing of the Sinn Fein.

The decommissioning body, headed by the Canadian General John de Chastelain, has reported negative progress and called on the IRA to start "substantive engagement" with it as early as possible. The Sinn Fein and the IRA have virtually boycotted the decommissioning body in recent months and instead, they have been talking to a team of independent weapons inspectors. The Chastelain report has pointed out that the process of decommissioning must start now if the June deadline set by the Good Friday Agreement is to be met.

The Sinn Fein, however, maintains that there can be no pro-

gress on decommissioning unless the British Government meets its demands on new policing arrangement and "demilitarisation" of Northern Ireland. It wants the new police body which would replace the Royal Ulster Constabulary to be more "democratic" and "transparent" than is envisaged in the legislation passed by British Parliament recently.

On demilitarisation, it specifically wants watch towers and other visible symbols of security to be dismantled. The Republicans led by the Sinn Fein are not happy with the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mr. Peter Mandelson's handling of the peace process, alleging that he is being influenced by the Unionists.

If the Sinn Fein sticks to its rigid position, then there is every chance of the Unionists walking out of the power-sharing executive set up after the Good Friday Agreement as a major step towards reconciliation. The Unionist chief and the First Minister in

the Provincial Assembly, Mr. David Trimble, has been under pressure from the party hardliners to leave the executive in the absence of visible progress on decommissioning.

There are fears that at the Unionists' council meeting next month his leadership might be challenged on the issue if he is not able to report some progress by then. Mr. Trimble is the only credible voice of moderation in the Unionist camp and his ouster would be a blow to the peace process.

The Sinn Fein is conscious of this but its leader, Mr. Gerry Adams, does not want to give the impression of capitulating to pressures from Unionist hardliners, particularly when there are hardliners within his own camp who could create difficulties for him. In the next few weeks, the Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, and his Irish counterpart, Mr. Bertie Ahern, would need to do some footwork to get the two sides to pull back from the brink.

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# Grab this accord

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**A**FTER SEVERAL twists and turns, the perpetually threatened peace process in Northern Ireland has ended up in a cul de sac. But in a perverse sort of a way that is not altogether bad news for the simple reason that from a dead-end things can only improve. For all the posturing over the Good Friday Agreement both sides — the Protestant Unionists and the Republicans — are conscious of the enormous political cost of wrecking the agreement which remains the most credible road map to peace. They know that if the agreement collapses it would cause irreparable damage to peace prospects and it would be difficult to pick up the pieces again.

Thus, even as both sides have strong reservations about some of its features they have shown considerable restraint in pushing their viewpoint though no doubt on occasion the hardliners — and there is no dearth of them on either side — have succeeded in creating a scare. In recent weeks,

*For all the posturing over the Good Friday Agreement, the Unionists and the Republicans are conscious that it remains the most credible road map to peace in Northern Ireland.*  
**HASAN SUROOR reports.**

service" on the lines of the Patten Commission's report. It is not satisfied with the British Government's proposals which are being currently debated in Parliament and are slated to be formalised before the end of the year. According to the Sinn Fein, these fall far short of the Patten Commission's report and amount to a "dilution" of the Good Friday agreement. It has accused the British Government of trying to "appease" the Unionists and made it clear that nothing short of the full implementation of the Patten Report would be acceptable to it.

On arms decommissioning, it is the Unionists who are complain-

arms should be physically destroyed or taken out of the IRA's control.

The two sides have been engaged in a running battle on replacing the RUC and arms decommissioning and, after a lull, things are hotting up again. The latest eruption has its roots in a recent parliamentary byelection which the Ulster Unionists lost to the more hawkish Democratic Unionists who are firmly opposed to the Good Friday agreement, and accuse the UUP of "betraying" the Protestant cause. What really hurt the UUP was that the seat which it lost to the Democratic Unionists had been one of its safe bases. Its loss in an elec-

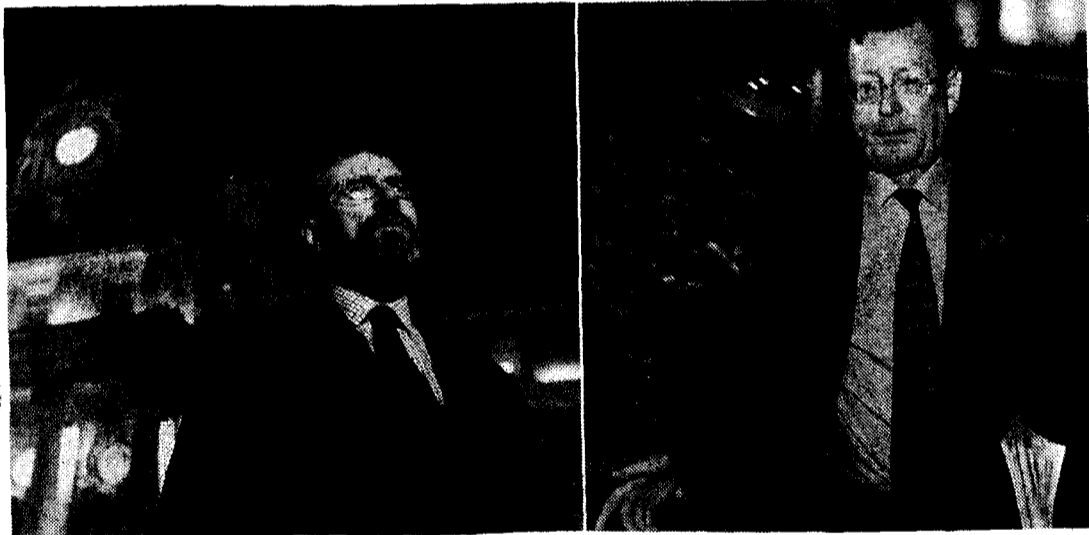
have brought the Good Friday agreement under renewed pressure. His decision to bar the Sinn Fein Ministers from attending the meetings of the crucial cross-border council until the IRA starts decommissioning has raised the political temperature in the otherwise freezing Belfast. The decision was a tradeoff with the party hawks led by Mr. Jeffrey Donaldson who in turn agreed to suspend their demand for quitting the power-sharing executive.

The Sinn Fein which sees the cross-border council with Ireland as a crucial element of the Good Friday agreement and a symbol of a United Ireland is livid. Mr. Adams has called it a "disaster" for the peace process and an attempt to "subvert" the Good Friday agreement. Technically Mr. Trimble, who is the First Minister (effectively the boss) of the Provincial Government, can bar anyone from attending the council meetings because the invitations are cleared by him, but politically it smacks of authoritarianism and Mr. Adams is right in pointing out that the Sinn Fein has the political mandate to sit on the executive and the cross-border bodies. "We are not there at the Unionists' mercy," he said.

A showdown was averted when a cross-border council meeting a week ago was converted into an informal consultation but the fact that a Sinn Fein Minister attended it in a glare of media publicity while Mr. Trimble sulked exposed the Unionists' bluff. The Irish Government has made it clear that it does not approve of Mr. Trimble's new line and even in London the reaction has been far from encouraging for him. Yet, neither Dublin nor London — indeed nor Mr. Adams — want to see the UUP's leadership pass into the hands of the extremists.

The moderate Mr. Trimble remains everyone's best bet and they do not want to do anything that would make him more vulnerable than he already is to the more desperate elements in the party.

What is going on is a high-wire act and like all delicate balancing acts this one too has its limits and the detached view is that Mr. Adams will need to demonstrate his commitment to arms decommissioning in more concrete terms if he really wants Mr. Trimble to succeed. The UUP has set November 30 as the deadline for the IRA to start decommissioning before it moves further on the Good Friday agreement. Clearly the idea is to get Mr. Adams agree to a time-frame and clearly Mr. Adams owes it to the peace process to respond.



**The Sinn Fein president, Mr. Gerry Adams, and the Ulster Unionist leader, Mr. David Trimble... can they get the peace going?**

they came close to derailing the agreement several times but on each occasion the leadership managed to pull it back from the brink. To that extent both the Ulster Unionist Party chief, Mr. David Trimble, and the Sinn Fein president, Mr. Gerry Adams, have handled the anti-agreement elements in their own camps fairly well without appearing to give in to the rival side.

The two main sticking points are: arms decommissioning by the Irish Republican Army (IRA), armed wing of the Sinn Fein, and replacing the controversial Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) with what the Sinn Fein calls a "democratically accountable policing

ing. They want to see "visible" progress before agreeing to go any further down the Good Friday road. They point out that the Good Friday agreement envisaged the completion of the process of arms decommissioning by May 2001, and to meet that deadline the process should have started by now.

The Sinn Fein refuses to be pinned down to a rigid timetable saying that effectively the arms have already been put beyond use. This is confirmed by the two international arms inspectors who have checked the IRA arms dumps twice — the last inspection took place earlier this month.

But Unionists insist that the

tion fought on the Good Friday Agreement plank was seen as a show of no-confidence by the people in the UUP's stand on the agreement, particularly its decision to sit on a power-sharing executive with the Sinn Fein.

The election defeat has given the anti-Trimble faction in UUP a handle to get Mr. Trimble to take a tougher line or quit. They have blamed his "soft" approach for what they regard as an erosion in popular support for the UUP as against the hardline Democratic Unionists. Twice in recent weeks, Mr. Trimble has succeeded in fending off a challenge to his leadership but the compromises that he has to make in the process

# Ulster problems wait for Clinton

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, Nov. 28. Even as the White House on Monday confirmed that the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton would visit Northern Ireland next month on a peace mission, the political temperature in Belfast rose again with the Sinn Fein threatening not to allow any more inspections of its arms dumps, thus further delaying the process of arms decommissioning by the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

The Good Friday Agreement could be in serious trouble if the Sinn Fein goes ahead with its threat, and Mr. Clinton will have his work cut out when he arrives in the province in mid-December. He is expected to spend three days in the U.K. and Ireland from December 12 to December 14. This would be his third visit to Northern Ireland and according to a White House announcement it is intended to help "overcome current difficulties on the path to lasting peace."

Meanwhile, the Sinn Fein's move follows its dissatisfaction with the new policing leg-

islation intended to reform the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) as part of the Good Friday Agreement. The Sinn Fein says the legislation falls far short of the Patten Commission report which had recommended complete dismantling of the RUC and its replacement by a more "democratic" and "transparent" police force acceptable to all sides in Northern Ireland.

The Sinn Fein chairman, Mr. Michel McLaughlin denounced the new legislation as a "betrayal" by the British Government. He was particularly angry with the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mr. Peter Mandelson saying that his approach to policing had "damaged the tenuous bridge of trust" between the Republicans and the Government.

He thought that London had succumbed to pressures from the Unionists and made it clear that in its present form the new arrangement was not acceptable to the Republicans. IRA dissidents, who had broken away to form the Real IRA protesting the

Sinn Fein's moderate policies, will be encouraged by the Government's perceived tilt towards the Unionists on the issue of police reforms.

Clearly, the Sinn Fein wants to pre-empt any move by the Real IRA to embarrass it, and hence the threat to block further inspection of arms dumps. The arms decommissioning is already a major source of tension as the Unionists are extremely angry with its slow pace and are insisting on a firm time-frame.

The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) leader, Mr. David Trimble is under pressure from his party hardliners to walk out of the power-sharing arrangement with the Sinn Fein if there is no visible progress over the next few weeks. So far Mr. Trimble has been able to rein in the hardliners but he might not be able to withstand the pressure for too long and the British Government, worried that this could unravel the peace process, is trying to get the two sides to break the dead-

lock. The policing legislation, however, has given a new turn to the situation and there is a view that now only Mr. Clinton can bring about a compromise.

In another significant development, the Sinn Fein has got a nod from a court to challenge the legal validity of Mr. Trimble's ban on the Sinn Fein Ministers attending cross-border meetings with Irish Ministers.

The "ban" was a result of Mr. Trimble's compromise with party hardliners not to insist on walking out of the power-sharing executive. In the event, it has created its own problems.

The only silver lining in the clouds gathering over Belfast is that Mr. Trimble is seen both by the British and the Sinn Fein as the only moderate influence on the Unionists and therefore the Sinn Fein would think twice before doing anything to make his position vulnerable. For, it is literally a case of deluge after Mr. Trimble and nobody wants a deluge.

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g persons and "the need  
ward tension reduction  
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brighter future for our  
t said.

ome, Ms Albright sched-  
l on Wednesday to tell  
anese officials about her  
n. Earlier in the day, Ms  
into the countryside for  
op aide of Mr. Kim at a  
AP

ry important, therefore our delega-  
tion suggested this third country  
solution," Mr. Mori was quoted as  
telling Mr. Blair.

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* titled its edi-  
torial, "Mori's latest gaffe shames Ja-  
pan." The *Asahi* headlined a full-page  
piece, "What a loose tongue you  
have, Mr. Prime Minister." Thus,  
both ends of the ideological spectrum  
blasted Mr. Mori, who should be par-  
ticularly worried about the effect this  
will have on his party's already poor

At issue is not the accuracy of the  
1997 proposal but the extremely poor  
judgement by a Prime Minister in  
making this public while the matter is  
alive. For one thing, this third country  
option is now closed. More impor-  
tant, it definitely jeopardises the lives  
of the people allegedly abducted.  
Surely, North Korea knows that even  
if they were to be found in a third  
country and returned to Japan, they  
would talk about where they spent  
the past decades and why they were

have also tried to ask a foreign jour-  
nalist to deliver a personal letter to  
North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il,"  
said the *Yomiuri*. "The Group to  
build a New LDP," a caucus of young,  
right-wing, articulate legislators led  
by Mr. Nobuteru Ishihara said, "his  
(Mr Mori's) qualifications for Premier  
appear questionable." "He has dam-  
aged the national interest and endan-  
gered those abducted by his words."  
Prominent members of the group  
have sought Mr. Mori's resignation  
before the December party election.

## t Russia this week



**The Yugoslav President, Mr. Vojislav Kostunica (right), with the Bosnian Foreign Minister, Mr. Jadranko Prlic, on Sunday. Mr. Kostunica is the first Yugoslav leader to visit Bosnia since the end of its 1992-95 war. — AP**

democracy forces the chance to  
expand their control of the Ser-  
bian government — one of the  
last bastions of Mr. Milosevic  
power. Later, deputies in a sep-  
arate vote are expected to ap-  
prove individual Ministers for the  
transitional administration and  
set December 23 as the date for  
the Serbian elections.

The decision came despite a  
walkout by the 82 delegates of the

current Parliament, agreed to the  
transition government plan Octo-  
ber 16. However, parliamentary  
approval was delayed because of  
differences with Mr. Kostunica's  
Democratic Opposition of Serbia  
on individual appointments.

After the Socialists bowed to  
Mr. Kostunica's demands, the  
radicals filibustered a Parliament  
session for seven hours on Mon-  
day, forcing a postponement until

## No more dilution of accord: Sinn Fein

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, OCT. 24. The Sinn Fein has  
warned that any more "dilution"  
of the Good Friday Agreement  
under pressure from the Union-  
ists would amount to wrecking it  
and asked the British Govern-  
ment to ensure its implementa-  
tion. "We want to see it work", a  
Sinn Fein spokesman told foreign  
correspondents here on Monday.

Mr. Alex Maskey questioned the  
Unionists' insistence on linking  
the progress on decommissioning  
of arms by the Irish Republican  
Army (IRA) with the future of the  
accord. The accord, he argued,  
had its own autonomy and it was  
being "constantly diluted" on  
one pretext or the other. On arms  
decommissioning, he said the IRA  
would stick by whatever commit-  
ments it had given. He criticised  
the British Government for what  
he saw as its attempt to appease  
the Unionists even at the risk of  
whittling down the Good Friday  
accord to a point where it would  
lose its meaning.

Mr. Maskey, who is also his par-  
ty's councillor in the Northern  
Ireland Assembly, acknowledged  
that it was important that the  
leadership of Ulster Unionists did  
not pass into the hands of the har-  
dliners who were trying to desta-

the Unionists should not be al-  
lowed to come in the way of the  
agreement, he said.

Asked about the Dalai Lama's  
"peace mission" to Northern Ire-  
land last week, the spokesman  
said it was a "useful visit" though  
the Unionists did not like it. He  
thought the very fact that some-  
one of the stature of the Dalai La-  
ma directly appealed to the  
people to continue the dialogue  
was important and had an im-  
pact.

Meanwhile, the Sinn Fein lead-  
ers have begun lobbying for  
changes in the British Govern-  
ment's proposals to replace the  
existing Royal Ulster Constabul-  
ary (RUC) with a more impartial  
and democratic police force in  
Northern Ireland as recommend-  
ed by the former Hong Kong Gov-  
ernor, Mr. Chris Patten in his  
report. Mr. Maskey said the pro-  
posals, which were to be dis-  
cussed by the House of Lords, fell  
far short of the Patten report. The  
need for a new unarmed police  
force which would instil confi-  
dence in all sections of the people  
was accepted by all parties to the  
Good Friday Agreement but the  
Government's proposals did not  
reflect the spirit of the agreement,  
he said. While the Government  
had made some changes of

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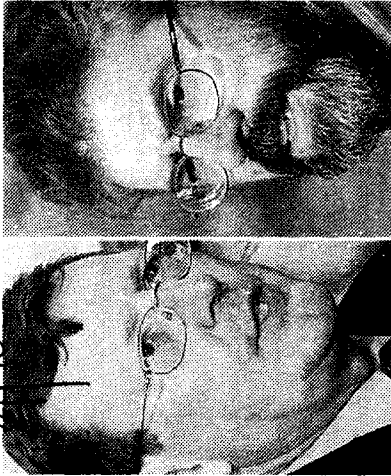
# Gerry Adams warns Trimble

By Hasan Suroor

**LONDON, Oct. 30.** Political tension in Northern Ireland has heightened following the Ulster Unionist chief, Mr. David Trimble's compromise with party hardliners over the weekend to survive a challenge to his leadership. His announcement that the Unionists would not allow Sinn Fein to attend cross-border council meetings until the Irish Republican Army (IRA) starts decommissioning has provoked a furious reaction from the Sinn Fein leader, Mr. Gerry Adams who described it as "stupid" and called Mr. Trimble "arrogant".

Mr. Adams said the Sinn Fein had a mandate to sit on the cross-border body and challenged the Unionists to bar it from attending its meetings. The next meeting is later this week, and it is being suggested that the meeting should be put off to avoid a showdown. The Sinn Fein regards the cross-border council as a crucial element of the Good Friday Agreement in its pursuit of a united Ireland. The council, which has representatives from both parts of Ireland, is seen as a symbol of a united Ireland and any attempt to bar the Sinn Fein from attending its meeting is bound to provoke a backlash.

Mr. Trimble's decision was a trade-off with the party hawks, who in turn relented on their demand that the unionists walk out of the power-sharing executive if the IRA does not start the process of putting its arms beyond use by November 30. While it helped him survive the threat to his leadership, it has brought the peace process in Northern Ireland under fresh pressure. The British Gov-



David Trimble

Gerry Adams

ernment, though relieved that the moderate Mr. Trimble survived, has now its work cut out as it tries to resolve the latest stand-off.

Mr. Adams made it clear that the Sinn Fein would not give in to "threats" and "diktats" and accused Mr. Trimble of trying to derail the Good Friday agreement. "Does Mr. Trimble think what he said is going to sort this out? Of course, it isn't and everyone knows that," he said questioning the Unionists' commitment to the peace process. He wanted the British Government to fulfil its obligation to ensure smooth implementation of the Good Friday agreement. A meeting between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. Peter Mandelson and the Irish Foreign Minister, Mr. Brian Cowen is expected this week — before the scheduled meeting of the cross-border council — to find a way out.

# Bush retains marginal edge over Gore

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**OXFORD (OHIO), Oct. 30.** It is down to the very last days of Campaign 2000, especially as it relates to the Presidential election. The frustrating part of it for the major party candidates, political analysts and pundits in the election business is that the race is still too close.

Both the Bush and the Gore camps believe that it is their candidate who is going to make it. The fact is that even seasoned people are reluctant to predict how November 7 is going to turn out. But as has been the case in the last several months there is a clear distinction between Mr. George W. Bush and Mr. Albert Gore Jr., both with respect to substance and form.

The suburban and rural pockets of conservatives in the State of Ohio do not take away the fact that the Democratic candidate for President does have support in this part of the country which is crucial for the election. Polls show Mr. Bush registering a small lead, but the Gore camp is making the point that it has not thrown in the towel.

In fact, an argument is being made that Mr. Gore will be starting advertisements this week but there are no indications of dropping by the State for a visit. It is being reminded in many quarters that in 1996, Mr. Bill Clinton had been posting a 10 per-

centage point lead over his Republican opponent, Mr. Bob Dole, and eventually won the State.

The Democrats are countering this with the argument that Ohio has traditionally been a Republican State and that Mr. Gore has to work harder. With this comes the acknowledgement that the Gore campaign could have done better. But the bottomline in this year's Presidential election is going to be the voter turnout. Academics are of the view that this time around it could perhaps be the worst-ever which in turn makes it harder on the candidates in a close race.

The Democratic Party has been counting on Mr. Clinton to not only assist the Vice-President in battleground States — as also in the biggest State of California — but also to garner the Afro-American and minority votes. The President has been working out strategy sessions with minority leaders in the hope that the core base would come out on the election day.

Analysts are now saying that both the Texas Governor and the Vice-President have about 200 Electoral College votes and the real scramble is on for another 138 votes for which there is a close contest. It is argued that if Florida goes to Mr. Bush and California to Mr. Gore, the election will be decided by States such as Ohio, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan and

Pennsylvania.

With barely a week left for the show-down, opinion polls show Mr. Gore is up by five percentage points in Florida and has a small lead in Wisconsin — the latter will be contested by the Bush camp. But State level polls also show the Texas Governor up by about 11 percentage points in Tennessee (the Vice-President's home State) and by about 7 percentage points in Pennsylvania. The candidates are tied in Michigan and Missouri, another crucial State.

In the final days, the Gore campaign is also of two minds on the role of Mr. Clinton. Many Democrats are convinced that unless their "top gun" is pulled out actively in the closing stages, the Vice-President is going to lose the election and in the process be a drag on several Congressional races.

The Gore campaign realises the advantages of Mr. Clinton coming out in the final home stretch; but at the same time sees the disadvantage by ways of an impact on independent voters who are turned off by the President. This is one major reason why the Gore campaign managers have apparently told the White House that while they would welcome Mr. Clinton campaigning for the Vice-President in California and in the South, they do not want him anywhere near swing States where independents are a factor.

# Panel for lifting sanctions on Austria

By Batuk Gathani

*Europe* *HD-12* *1999*  
**BRUSSELS, SEPT. 9.** The embarrassing isolation of Austria from the forums of the European Union will soon end after a committee of three "wise men" investigating the political and human rights situation in Austria recommended that diplomatic and economic sanctions against it be lifted.

The sanctions were imposed after the Austrian far right "Freedom Party" led by the controversial Mr Joerg Haider joined the coalition Government early this year. The "three wise men's" conclusions are ostensibly a face-saving opportunity for E.U. officials. Austria's isolation may end on September 18 at a meeting of E.U. Foreign Ministers.

The committee concluded that although the Freedom Party used "ambiguous, xenophobic language", violence against foreigners was less frequent in Austria than in many other countries of the E.U. "Analysts agree that the frequency and ferocity of violence against foreigners is more pronounced in France, Germany and Benelux countries than in Austria. Racial violence is mainly directed against Africans, Asians and Jews. For non-whites, it is often not safe to walk alone in what many foreigners now call 'ghettos infested by neo-Nazi Skinheads and their likes'". Non-European immigrants often prefer to live in areas where they have a majority.

The "wise men" submitted their report to the French President, Mr. Jacques Chirac — current holder of the rotating Presidency of the E.U. It is also argued that sustaining the sanctions against Austria could have a negative impact on the euro. E.U. officials breathed a sigh of relief with the submission of the report.

In January this year, the Social Democrats abandoned efforts to form a government, clearing the way for a centre-right coalition of conservatives and the Freedom Party to come to power.

Mr. Haider did not directly participate in the Government but his influence is such that he was seen as controlling the coalition policy by "remote control". Mr Haider, who at one time pursued anti-immigration and anti-E.U. agenda, has a high profile on the domestic front. Both Mr. Haider's critics and admirers agree that he may have "sobered up" as he has been making accommodating statements in recent weeks. Mr. Haider also warned that if the E.U. boycott of Austria continued, he would seek to block an agreement on reforms of E.U. institutions at the proposed summit in France in December.

In Austria, which has an unemployment rate of 11 per cent, Mr. Haider's agenda has a special appeal. In the early 1990's, Mr Haider triggered a controversy by praising Hitler's no-

torious "S.S" wing. The S.S. was created essentially to exterminate ethnic minorities and keep an eye on the rank and file of the military and civilian personnel of the Nazi establishment.

In the last Austrian general elections, the Freedom Party emerged as the second largest and one in five Austrians voted for it. Mr Haider is considered a "complex and confused" politician, who has often changed his mind on key issues. But

essentially, he is rated as a demagogue who follows politics of expediency. His anti-E.U. appeal has the support of the recession-hit middle class businessmen. Mr Haider's anti-immigration rhetoric has a special appeal for the extreme right in the Austrian society.

In land area, Austria is a little smaller than Assam and is one of Europe's most beautiful, scenic and richest countries with a population of over 17 million. In the heydays of the Cold War era, a neutral Austria was a bridge between the communist-ruled eastern Europe and democratic western Europe.

Austria has been a home for many East European refugees. Austria symbolised Europe's liberal and democratic traditions when it joined the E.U. in January 1995. Austrians enjoy a high standard of living as a result of the very generous but costly social security system.

THE HINDU

10 SEP 2000



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# EU lifts curbs against Austria

Vijay Dutt

London, September 13

ALL SANCTIONS against Austria, imposed by 14 member states of the European Union seven months ago following the entry of Jorg Haider's far-Right Freedom Party in its ruling coalition, have been lifted unconditionally by the European Union.

The 14 EU members had ostracised Haider for his alleged sympathy for Nazis' treatment of minorities and of supporting the immigration policies of Hitler. Haider had thereafter iterated several times that he was not exactly right in praising, almost 14 years ago, the immigration policies in Germany under the Nazis. But, he

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was not believed by other states and booed by protesters whenever he came to Brussels for EU meetings. Now, in what is an embarrassing climbdown by the 14 EU states, and particularly by France and Germany, a communique has been issued in Paris by the French, present holders of the rotating EU presidency, for ending the diplomatic aloofness towards Vienna.

The communique said, "The measures put in place by the states were useful. They can now be lifted." It added the continued presence of the Far Right Party in the Austrian Government remained a cause for "serious concern". It also stressed it was essential to continue with "special vigilance".

It is, however, apparent that the

14 member states have been forced to readmit Austria as their equal partner in the EU. The withdrawal of sanctions is an admission of defeat by them. This is obvious from the fact that no mechanism for monitoring civil rights performance of the Austrian Government has been set up.

Vienna is naturally jubilant. Its rigid stand against the united might of 14 member states has paid off. France and Germany were leading the campaign to break the coalition in Vienna and force Haider's party out of power. But, although Haider has distanced himself by quitting the leadership of the Freedom Party, he remains the driving force behind it.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 SEP 2000

# Terror stalks the land

ETA, SPAIN'S Basque separatist organisation, did not wait long to retaliate against the arrest last week of its top leadership by French and Spanish police. On Thursday morning, another municipal councillor belonging to the Prime Minister, Mr. Jose Maria Aznar's Popular Party was shot dead in the little town of San Andria del Besos, near the Catalan capital, Barcelona. The euphoria at the arrests was short-lived. Spain has again been plunged into uncertainty, fear and sorrow.

This is the 13th assassination since ETA's announcement last December that it was breaking a 14-month self-proclaimed ceasefire. The Aznar Government, it said, had failed to seize the opportunity for peace and dialogue that ETA had offered. The latest attack came on the eve of a major parliamentary debate on ETA

**ETA, Spain's Basque separatist organisation, did not wait long to retaliate against the arrest of its top brass.**  
VAIJU NARAVANE reports.

and just hours before Mr. Aznar's visit to Catalonia.

The victim this time was Jose Luiz Ruiz Casado, 42-year-old father of two. He was shot in the head by two men at very close range as he was preparing to drive to work. The abandoned getaway car was later recovered by the police. Attack after attack, injured after injured, death

after death. In the space of two months, ETA has unleashed a campaign of violence comparable to the worst days of its terror in the 70s.

Following the arrest last week of ETA's leader, Ignacio Gracia Arregui, better known as Inaki de Renteria, and his wife on September 15 and, a day later, of 15 other suspected Basque terrorists by French and Spanish police, the Spanish Government announced that it had "practically dismantled" the logistical apparatus of ETA. The arrests, which were made in the French Basque country, were described by French police as "the biggest catch ever of ETA militants". Those arrested included Angel Picabea Ulgade, aka Atxuri, who masterminded the smuggling of terrorists and arms into Spain from France, and Jose Luis Turillas, known to be the Basque logistics chief.

Mr. Aznar in a cautious statement said last Sunday: "The battle against terrorism will be won shortly, even if we have to suffer a great deal for it" and called for "permanent mobilisation in these difficult moments". The Interior Minister, Mr. Jaime Mayor Oreja, declared that "ETA's logistical apparatus has been dismantled". He took care to add however, that "without doubt the terrorists will reconstitute very quickly". Mr. Oreja's words were to prove prophetic.

King Juan Carlos has expressed "sorrow, anger and condemnation of a cowardly attack" which cost councillor Casado his life. The king, undoubtedly the most loved, admired and respected figure in the country, called on all democrats "to unite to defend freedom, human rights and life".

Spanish police are finding out just how difficult it is going to be to get rid of Basque terrorism. Its roots go down very deep. Experts feel that besides ETA and its political wing, the EH or Euskal Herritarok, which has 18 per cent of the popular vote in the Basque country, there are several radical organisations which recruit young people. These include Kale Borroka or Street Struggle or EKIN.

According to a recent poll, some 60 per cent of those interviewed said they supported a separate Basque state. This popular support allows ETA to re-group and bring in fresh recruits each time the top leadership is arrested. In 1992, the Spanish police relentlessly hunted down ETA and captured its top leadership. But to its dismay, very soon another structure was in place. While Inaki de Renteria was a big fish, he was considered moderate compared to the more hardline groups which are now emerging.

Spanish authorities are on edge and extremely vigilant. For not only has ETA lost its top strategist in Inaki de Renteria, his predecessor, Francisco Mugica Garmendia or "Pakito" went on trial in Madrid last Wednesday, an almost unbearable humiliation for the separatist organisation. Pakito was one of ETA's great chiefs from 1990 to 1992 before his arrest in the French Basque town of Bidart. He is accused of the murder of a state prosecutor and a bomb blast in Saragossa in which 11 persons were killed. The Public Prosecutor has called for prison sentences of 37 and 123 years.

Experts feel that while ETA can recruit quickly from the many young radical organisations such as Kale Borroka, Jarrai or EKIN, most of its battle hardened and experienced leadership is now behind bars. The three names now being circulated to take the place of Inaki de Renteria are Miguel Albizu or "Mikel Antza," Maria Soledad Iparraguirre Genetxe or "Anboto" and Francisco Javier Garcia Gaztelu. Miguel Albizu represented the Basques at the only informal talks ever held with representatives of Mr. Aznar in Switzerland in May 1999.



An ETA suspect (right) is led away by a masked policeman after a raid in northern Spain.

# Rebel IRA plans to disrupt march foiled

BELFAST, AUG. 12. Thousands of drum-thumping Protestants took to the streets of Northern Ireland today to celebrate an ancient battle victory over Catholics as bomb alerts shut down the main railway line into Londonderry.

Special trains were due to bring 10,000 Protestant marchers to Londonderry for the "Apprentice Boys" parade, an annual commemoration of "the relief of Derry" — the ending of a long siege of Protestants by Roman Catholic forces in 1689. Police in the province said telephone bomb threats had been received and the line between Coleraine and Londonderry would remain closed until a security operation had ended.

Northern Ireland's Roman Catholic minority and Protestant majority and sharing power in government, but gunmen and bombers still cast a dark shadow over efforts to reach a permanent peace in the British province. The Irish army yesterday blew up a van packed with explosives that security sources said had been intended to devastate the Londonderry parade. Dissident Republicans opposed to the Northern Ireland peace process were blamed for the 227kg of home-made explosives found in a van that broke through a police roadblock in Northern Ireland

and was later abandoned close to the border in the north-western county of Donegal.

The Irish Republican Army and other mainstream guerilla groups on both sides are observing ceasefires while politicians try to seal a lasting peace based on the 1998 Good Friday accord. But wrangling about parades lays bare old sores and maintains a legacy of sectarianism that has bedevilled the province and is slow to die. In Belfast, police maintained a low-key security presence in the flashpoint Lower Ormeau road district, a Catholic stronghold in the capital, to enforce an official order barring the Apprentice Boys from marching through. The marchers made no attempt to break through police lines at the Ormeau bridge and later boarded buses to take them to their main parade in Londonderry.

Last year, there were ugly scenes in Belfast as riot police cleared Catholic protesters off the road in order to force through the Protestant parade, and this triggered unrest in Londonderry. This year, the Londonderry parade was expected to pass off peacefully after talks involving the Catholic Bogside residents' group in Londonderry and the Apprentice Boys led to "an understanding" on Wednesday. — Reuters

TEL: 1234

13 AUG 2000

# They need them but they don't want them

Hindu  
10-16  
6/8



A boatload of would-be immigrants... controversial influx.

*Europe is in the grip of an unparalleled wave of immigration... But what appears an evident solution to demographers and some hard-headed economists is anathema to cultural purists and conservatives. VAIJU NARAVANE discusses the complex issues involved.*

EUROPE IS in the grip of a hitherto unparalleled wave of immigration. The number of persons knocking on Europe's door waiting to be let in went up from 75 million in 1965 to 119 million in 1990. With the population explosion under way in many southern countries, massive movement of people from the south to the north is both inevitable and foreseeable. At the same time, the Old Continent is suffering from an incurable malady — old age — for which the only solution is regular injections of young blood. Demographers have pointed out that Europe will need to import between 47 million and 159 million immigrants between now and 2050 to make up the acute shortfall of workers caused by its own increasingly negative birth rate and the ageing of its population.

Given the decline in Europe's working population, the ideal ratio of four to five active workers for each pensioner will be almost impossible to maintain. But what appears an evident solution to demographers and some hard-headed economists is anathema to cultural purists and conservatives let alone militants from the extreme, xenophobic right.

Ministers of Justice and the Interior of the European Union's 15 member-states last week ended a two-day preparatory meeting on the

perspectives of immigration in the decades to come. They were preparing the ground for another meeting to be held on November 30 and December 1 of Ministers of Justice and Foreign Affairs which will adopt a long-term immigration policy for Europe, including texts on the granting of political asylum.

"This particular meeting was just the groundwork. We wanted to bring about a collective awareness of the question of immigration. We hope this will lead to long term policy and not ad hoc, piecemeal legislation in the matter of immigration. We hope this will lead to coherent and cohesive policy on the question of immigration," an aide to the French Interior Minister, Mr. Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who chaired the meeting as part of France's six-month Presidency of the E.U., told this correspondent. Mr. Chevènement himself is unambiguous: "Immigration is one of the major problems of the 21st century, one of the greatest challenges of the next half century for the countries of the European Union, and we must deal with it in a sensible way," he says. His statements come none too soon.

The shattering discovery of 58 bodies of would-be asylum seekers last June and the arrest of several hundred clandestine immigrants attempting to enter various E.U. countries

these past weeks, have given a certain urgency to the member-states' directives to the Commission to reinforce the fight against illegal immigration.

Four major factors have tended to increase the immigration flux to Europe this past decade. They are the geometric increase in the populations of the south, the widening gap between standards of living in the north and the south, the rise in the number of wars, local conflicts and totalitarian regimes and the rapid development of communications.

But the harsh facts about demographics in Europe are forcing Governments to take a second look at the zero-immigration policies so far advocated by most European nations. Europe's population is expected to decline by some 30 million over the next two decades because of falling birth rates. This will realign the age pyramid, further strengthening the already strong base of older persons while narrowing the younger tip. The fact that young people tend to enter the job market at a later age than before — studies have shown that more and more people are going in for a university education and entering the job market only in their twenties — will further narrow this tip and reduce the number of productive hands in the economy. According to these estimates, even a country such as France, with a population of about 60 million will need to induct some 7,50,000 new workers into the economy each year if its present structure of pensions and social benefits is to be retained unchanged.

Already with a booming economy certain sectors are experiencing a shortage of qualified workers and the "new economy" has completely changed the name of the game. Even conservative politicians are now calling for a "radical re-think" on immigration policies. Germany's decision to import 20,000 information technicians from outside the E.U. has opened up a system of quotas for the first time. A common practice in the U.S., many Europeans feel that to have a selective open-door policy would discriminate against certain, most certainly the poorer sections of third world populations, and would go against the human rights charter Europe would like to adopt.

The French Foreign Minister, Mr. Hubert Vedrine, summed up Europe's dilemma: "There is no contradiction between the fact of opening up immigration in certain sectors where there is a need and to fight clandestine immigration." However, the Minister admitted, "the fixing of quotas hurts our sensibilities because it infringes certain rights." The British who have practiced zero-immigration for a very long time tend to be less squeamish on this issue of selectivity.

Europe also has widely varying rules and regulations and norms governing the grant of political asylum, the treatment of clandestine immigrants and of those who have been given resident papers. Germany, for instance, has no plans to regularise illegal immigrants already on its soil. But laws in Germany on asylum appear to be more lax than in France where the grant of asylum has been reduced to a trickle. Britain too is harsh with illegal immigrants but its asylum laws are much more generous. France on the contrary finds it more difficult to boot out those who have already crept in clandestinely.

THE HINDU

6 AUG 200

**N**OT A week goes by without terrorist attacks and other forms of intimidation in Spain. The perpetrators, ETA, the dreaded Basque separatist organisation. The recent assassinations include the killings of town councillors, civil guards, industrialists and members of the Prime Minister, Mr. Jose Maria Aznar's Popular Party. Spaniards have reacted angrily to these killings, turning up en masse for funerals, marked with handclapping as a sign of respect for the dead.

Members of the security forces have always been at the top of ETA's hit list. But more recently the terrorist organisation, as it has become more desperate, has tended to target politicians, especially municipal councillors and local heavyweights. Recently business leaders have also been added to the list of targets.

The terrorist group would like a separate state in the Basque regions of Spain and southwestern France. The province already enjoys substantial autonomy and the Spanish population is now fed up of the violence unleashed by ETA. With its political wing, the HB and the EH, extremists are holding out for a separate state, one that the Spanish Government has vowed they will never have.

ETA is a Basque language acronym for Basque Freedom and Homeland. In its 30-year campaign, the organisation has killed over 800 people and extorted huge ransoms from kidnappings and, since ending its latest truce, staging some spectacular attacks which have claimed ten lives and injured over a dozen.

"Tregua Indefinida." The headline had jolted most Spaniards on September 17 1998. It wasn't the *tregua* (truce) that had surprised them. There have been at least six ceasefire declarations by the ETA these past three decades. But it was the only unlimited truce ever, and the announcement kindled the first tentative hope that the bloody guerrilla war might, one day, come to an end. These hopes, however, were short-lived. Last December, barely 14 months after it declared a ceasefire, ETA equally suddenly decided to end it. "They used this 14-month period to regroup

*In Spain, not a week goes by without terrorist attacks and other forms of intimidation by the ETA.*

**VAIJU NARAVANE on the Basque separatist group's depredations.**

and to re-arm," said one policeman bitterly.

The Basque country lies in north-eastern Spain, in a region running from the Bay of Biscay to the foothills of the western Pyrenees in France. On the Spanish side it is made up of the highly industrialised provinces of Navarre, Guipuzcoa, Alava and Biscay. On the French side, the Basques live in the lower Pyrenees region.

The ambition of political independence was first formulated by Sabino de Arana Goiri with the founding of the Partido Nacional-

ista Vasco (PNV) in 1894. The advent of the ill-fated Spanish Republic in 1930 further fanned the flames of Basque nationalism and saw the emergence of a host of nationalistic groupings. The Basque Government-in-exile lived in France and for a long time received funding and support from Charles de Gaulle who was bitterly opposed to the Spanish dictator, Francisco Franco. The Basques were determinedly anti-Franco and, like the Catalonians, suffered terrible repression at his hands.

Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna or ETA itself was born of a schism within the original PNV. The old party founded by Arana disapproves of the terrorist tactics adopted by ETA and is willing to settle for a high level of autonomy within the Spanish state.

The September 16, 1998, ceasefire declaration by ETA while agreeing to stop the killing had made no concessions on its essential demands. ETA's aim continues to be that of a separate Basque state. Nor does the organisation say it will lay down arms, a condition for talks laid down by the Government.

The Government's initial reaction to the ceasefire announcement was of disbelief and contempt. Mr. Aznar said he could not trust the Basque declaration. Mr. Aznar's attitude of distrust and disbelief came in for severe criticism from the church, human rights and peace organisations. In retrospect, his caution appears to have been justified. In 1921, Spain's celebrated writer, Jose Ortega Y Gasset, wrote that nationalism would break Spain. Almost 80 years later Spain certainly seems headed that way.

THE HINDU

27 AUG 2000

Europe  
HD-16

## Basque leader calls for talks

3/18 W

By Vaiju Naravane

PARIS, AUG. 30. Thousands of people demonstrated silently in Spain's major cities to protest against Tuesday's killing of a 29-year municipal councillor belonging to the Prime Minister, Mr. Jose Maria Aznar's Popular Party in the Basque town of Zumarraga, 400 km north of Madrid. Angry demonstrators raised slogans against the ETA, the Basque separatist organisation blamed for the killing. Several hundred people outside a church in Madrid shouted "Justice, justice" as Mr. Aznar and the Interior Minister, Mr. Jaime Mayor Ortega, arrived there for the funeral service. Mourners inside and outside the church broke into silent applause to demonstrate their solidarity with the family.

Madrid's city hall flew its flags at half mast and councillors observed five minutes silence as a sign of respect for Manuel Indiano who belonged to the capital. His assassination is the 12th killing this year attributed to the ETA which broke a 14-month, self-imposed ceasefire last December. Seven of the 12 have been killed in the past month alone. Indiano was shot six or seven times in the chest at point blank range in the small sweet shop he ran in Zumarraga. He was the third municipal councillor from the Popular Party to have been killed this summer.

Thousands of the people gathered in Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Vitoria and San Sebastian. Mr. Aznar, who was one of the mourners, cut short a trip to Poland to return to Madrid on Tuesday night.

In Vitoria, capital of the Basque autonomous region, the head of the Basque Government, Mr. Juan Jose Ibarretxe, whose PNV or Basque Nationalist Party has been criticised for its reluctance to firmly denounce ETA's po-

litical wing — the HF-EH or Herri Batasuna-Euskal Herritarrok — today proposed launching a new "forum" to discuss the Basque issue. He has invited several political parties, including the socialists, to participate in the discussions. Mr. Aznar is expected to warn the socialists not to become a victim of Basque manipulation. The ETA, which is calling for a separate Basque nation stepped up its cam-

paign of violence. Separatists had hoped they would win concessions from the Aznar Government but the conservative Prime Minister remained obstinately hardline, refusing one of the ETA's principal demands to re-group ETA prisoners who are scattered in jails across the country and in the far flung Canary Island. The ETA used the 14-month ceasefire to regroup, re-train and re-arm.

THE HINDU

31 AUG 2000

## **E.U. curbs on Austria will remain: Jospin**

**NOGENT-SUR-MARNE, FRANCE, JULY 2.** The French Prime Minister, Mr. Lionel Jospin, said yesterday that the E.U. sanctions against Austria would be maintained at the start of France's presidency of the European Union.

"We will not toughen them, but we won't relax them either," said Mr. Jospin on the day that France took control of the rotating six-month presidency from Portugal.

He said the political sanctions, which were imposed on Austria earlier this year in protest at the inclusion in a coalition government of the far-right Freedom Party, were reasonable and would remain in place pending a report from the "three wise men" appointed to analyse Austria's human rights record.

"The French presidency intends to maintain the approach adopted by the 14 E.U. members."

Mr. Jospin expressed his continued support for the measures and said it was impossible not to react to the political situation in Austria.

Austria's 14 E.U. partners agreed on Thursday that a three-member panel from the European Court of Human Rights would produce a report analysing "the commitment of the Austrian government to common European values, in particular concerning the rights of minorities, refugees and immigrants."

The outgoing Portuguese presidency of the E.U. said sanctions could be lifted if the panel confirmed Austria's commitment to "common European values".

France assumed the presidency at a time when the group is gearing for expansion amid calls for a common European defence policy, an idea not well appreciated by the U.S.

France said that preparing a social agenda for Europe, a five-year plan for modernising and reinforcing labour and a new treaty to get E.U. institutions ready for enlargement would be its priorities for the period. — AFP, PTI

THE HINDU

3 JUL 2000

# Ulster shudders over Drumcree march

**DRUMCREE (N.IRELAND), JULY 2.** Every July, the world's press surrounds the picturesque stone church at Drumcree parish in Portadown. So too do huge reinforcements of troops in riot gear, ugly steel barricades, and barbed wire. Since July 1995, Drumcree has been notorious as the crucible of Northern Ireland's burning hatreds.

This year, as in previous years, there seems little hope of a peaceful resolution: 2,000 troops are already in place, preparing for potential trouble.

The dispute remains unchanged: the Portadown Orangemen believe they have a time-honoured right to march from their annual church service at Drumcree parish church, down the Garvaghy Road and back into the centre of Portadown (a staunchly Protestant town).

They have been following the same route since 1807, they argue, and their right to "walk the Queen's highway" is a matter of civil and

religious liberty. In recent decades, the population of the Garvaghy Road has changed to become predominantly Catholic.

The Catholic residents say that the Orangemen should follow an alternative route because the presence of "Orange feet on the Garvaghy Road" is inherently offensive to them and must be stopped. The main local players in the Drumcree conflict are unchanged since 1995 when loyalist violence erupted after the parade was banned for the first time, and republican violence flared once it was finally allowed through.

The spokesman for the Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition is Breandan MacCionnaith, a former IRA man who was once convicted of attempting to blow up the Royal Legion Hall in Portadown. Now a veteran of the Drumcree cauldron, Mr MacCionnaith is not known for his love of compromise.

Nor are the local Orangemen, whose spokesman is Mr. David Jones, a bearded,

middle-aged man who has become increasingly entrenched in his views over the years. The Orangemen refuse to speak to Mr. MacCionnaith because of his terrorist past. They also refuse to speak to the Parades Commission — an independent group set up by the Government to make rulings on contentious parades — arguing that it has no authority.

The Orangemen applied for the right to walk down the Garvaghy Road on Sunday: it was denied last Monday by the Parades Commission. They have indicated they will make a token protest at the steel barricade as police bar their way. Then, every night this week, they will hold a symbolic parade to the barricade, building up to their main march on July 9.

On Saturday, trouble was already simmering in Portadown. Mr MacCionnaith arrived in an area of Portadown where loyalist youths were erecting an arch to mark the celebrations for July 12, the focal date of the loyalist marching season. They were being watched by nationalist youths, and the two groups were kept apart by the RUC.

After Mr MacCionnaith arrived he broke through police lines to speak to the nationalist youths. He was arrested for disorderly conduct and taken away by the RUC to Sinn Fein protests. It does not bode well for a quiet resolution to the annual Drumcree crisis.

Over five years the row has become progressively more bitter. In 1995 the ban brought a three-day stand-off between Orangemen, loyalist paramilitaries and the Royal Ulster Constabulary. When the Orangemen were eventually allowed down the Garvaghy Road, Rev Ian Paisley and Mr. David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, clasped hands in a gesture of triumph — an act which enraged nationalists.

Every July since — whether the march has been permitted or no — Drumcree has been associated with a rise in the sectarian temperature, exploited by paramilitaries on both sides.

There are rumours that the loyalist paramilitaries, disillusioned by the rewards which they have received from the "peace process", are lining up Drumcree as a "show of strength". One thing is certain: Whatever the Parades Commission's decision on Monday, Northern Ireland will spend a week holding its breath. — © *Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2000*



**A British soldier takes cover behind barriers as Orange Order marchers throw stones at troops after being stopped outside Drumcree Church on Sunday. — AP**

THE HINDU

- 3 JUL 2000



# Austria threatens referendum over EU curbs

Vijay Dutt  
London, July 5

AUSTRIA HAS threatened to hold a national referendum against sanctions imposed by the rest of the 14 EU-member countries following the admission of Jörg Haider's Far Right Freedom Party into the ruling coalition last February.

Austrians call the sanctions an unprecedented political quarantine. But, EU suspects Haider. Decades ago he praised Hitler's employment and immigration policies. He alienated EU further by using xenophobic slogans during the national elections last year.

The EU members have tried hard to dissuade Austrians from planning the referendum but its Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel announced the decision for it after a six-hour meet-

ing of a high-powered committee yesterday. Haider was present during the deliberations.

The main reason for Schüssel's decision could be France's hardline approach towards Austria. Vienna does not expect that EU will lift the sanctions during the next six months with France taking over the rotating EU presidency. So Austrians have planned the referendum in late October or early November to pile pressure on France and other EU members. Austria has indicated that it will block institutional reforms needed prior to the enlargement of EU. It showed its hardened stance in opposing a deal on the controversial withholding of tax on savings at the EU summit in Feira. Austria said it was blocking the deal because of constitutional reasons.

Sources in Brussels said that Austria would use referen-

dum as a veto against plans to bring in East European countries and to highlight its argument that bigger countries have been trying to over-ride the wishes of smaller countries.

Mr Schüssel has denied the charge. He says that there is no move to block the union but he wants to make it act in a positive manner. Haider has been quoted as saying, "I never believed a diplomatic solution (for lifting sanctions against Austria) would work." He has, despite nominally resigning from the party leadership, gained more influence by riding over the crest of anti-EU sentiment in Austrians.

Several EU countries like Italy and Ireland are worried that a continued anti-Haider approach by them will only strengthen Freedom Party's hold on the people. Haider could then become Chancellor, a possibility that the EU dreads.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Ire... land

**T**O BORROW a tired phrase, the more things change in Northern Ireland the more they seem to remain the same. Over the last year, changes on a scale which could not have been imagined in earlier times have transformed the province's political landscape. The IRA, the paramilitary organisation that was formed nearly a century ago to force the British out of Ireland, has taken what appears to be a definitive step towards giving up its armed struggle by agreeing to have some of its weapons dumps inspected and sealed by international observers.

On the protestant side, the Ulster Unionists, Northern Ireland's largest protestant party, has agreed to share power with the IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein, in a provincial Government, something which would have been difficult to conceive of even a few months ago. This movement away from long-entrenched positions towards political compromise reflects the realisation among Northern Ireland's more pragmatic politicians that violence and confrontation were getting them nowhere.

But amidst this welcome evidence that a new Northern Ireland is being born, there are also clear signs that the communal hatred and divisions of old are far from dead. Nowhere is this more obvious

*Amidst evidence that a new Northern Ireland is being born, there are also clear signs that the communal hatred and divisions of old are far from dead.*  
**THOMAS ABRAHAM**  
reports.

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than in Portadown, a small market town about an hour's journey south of Belfast. It is in Portadown that every year in July Northern Ireland's communal divisions are laid bare. The spark that sets off communal anger is an annual march by the Orange Order, a protestant organisation dedicated to maintaining Northern Ireland's protestant heritage.

The Orange Order is named after the protestant King William of Orange, who in the 17th century defeated the catholic King James and ensured the ascendancy of protestantism in England. The organisation does little except carry out marches and parades to commemorate various protestant and British war victories. The Orangemen see these parades as a harmless celebration of their protestant

heritage. The catholics, however, see them as exercises in protestant triumphalism intended to rub in their minority status in Northern Ireland. Despite this, most of the Orange marches pass without incident. The march at Portadown is a notorious exception.

Portadown is where the Orange Order was founded, and it is the home of a particularly combative streak of protestantism. It also has a militant catholic community, where Sinn Fein and the IRA have a strong influence. These two uncompromising forces clash head-on on the first Sunday in July each year, when the Portadown Orangemen parade to a church in Drumcree on the outskirts of town, to remember those who died in the Battle of the Somme in the First World War. The parade proceeds without incident from the Orange headquarters in the middle of Portadown to the church. It is on the return journey that trouble breaks out. The Orangemen say their traditional route back into town passes through Garvaghy Road, a staunchly catholic street close to Drumcree church. The residents of Garvaghy Road, led by Mr. Brendan McCionnath, a one-time IRA activist, say the parade is provocative and do not want it to pass through their area. The Orange Order insists it has the right to march where it wants to. After several years

when the parade had been escorted through Garvaghy Road amidst pitched battles between the security forces and the residents, a Government-appointed parades commission decided that the Orangemen should not walk down Garvaghy Road, but should take another route back into town.

The ban on marching down Garvaghy Road has triggered intense protestant anger. While the Orange Order has always insisted that it has only called for peaceful protests, protestant paramilitaries have been involved in stoking the violence. Police figures show the scale of the violence that was unleashed over ten days this month: there were 329 attacks on the security forces in which 81 policemen and six soldiers were injured. There were 305 incidents of petrol bomb throwing, and 95 homes and 404 cars were damaged.

This violence is in a sense an act of desperation from a small core of militant protestants who feel threatened by the changes occurring in Northern Ireland. The unchallenged domination of the protestants once enjoyed in the province is now over, and the peace agreement has laid the foundation for a society in which the catholic minority will share power with the protestants. The majority of the protestant community accepts this, but there is a minority which regards the peace agreement as a betrayal of faith and community and uses the marching season in July to demonstrate its frustration.

But with the peace agreement slowly taking root, there is growing unhappiness within the protestant community and among the saner elements of the Orange Order at the violence and disruption that have been unleashed. The leadership of the Orange Order has become increasingly critical of its Portadown branch for not doing enough to dampen the violence that has surrounded the march. As one senior Orangeman, Mr. David Burnside, observed: "This is a defining moment within Orangeism... the leadership needs to get its act together... if it moves towards acceptance in any way of thuggery, it will discredit the Order."

The good news is that the violence is set to die down now that the high point of the marching season, July 12, has passed. The bad news is that next year this time Northern Ireland could be going through this annual ritual once again.

THE HINDU

16 JUL 2000

# Politics of Compassion

## EU Needs Immigrant Workers

By RASHMEE Z AHMED

**L**ONDON: The arithmetic of immigration is illogical. It gives rise to strange equations. Should one South Asian 'techie', for instance, be deemed the equivalent of 100 asylum-seekers? Germany has been asking itself a similar question in the last few days and does not seem to have a clear answer just yet. For the moment though, it has a brand new law enabling South Asian high-tech wal-lahs to enter the country from August as "guest workers" for up to five years. The German economics minister has announced that Indians and Pakistanis are leading the queue for 'Green Cards' which would enable them to take up jobs in the sadly-neglected German Information Technology sector. The German drawbridge has been lowered to invite black faces (albeit with outsize technologically-wired brains) into the Fatherland. Hardly surprising, when in all of Germany, there is just one newly-created chair in e-commerce, that at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. No wonder, despite more than four million unemployed people, nearly 100,000 jobs are going a-begging in the Internet sector. Hence, the damage-limitation legislation, but policy-makers are finding it hard to make the sums add up.

In the European Union, Germany has most-favoured nation status for asylum-seekers and refugees. Even after a decline in applications since 1997, when Germany banned asylum-seekers from finding jobs, it still had 95,300 people in the asylum queue in 1999. The number of asylum-seekers is expected to rise now that Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder wants to lift the ban. Meanwhile, Germany is planning to import nearly 30,000 computer professionals — mostly perhaps from India — over the next few years, something that is bound to give its Teutonic core palpitations at the prospect of being swamped by coloured people. In fact, Germany, with a fertility rate among the lowest in Europe, needs at least 100,000 immigrants every year for the next decade to maintain even a basic workforce.

Although this has powerfully impressed the German government, the opposition remains singularly uninspired. The conservative parties are focussing on what they see as a basic arithmetical certainty: More foreigners equals deracination. Q.E.D. The Bavarian premier, Edmund Stoiber, whose Christian

Social Union is the sister party of the main opposition Christian Democratic Union, has even suggested taking in the desirable foreigner, in this case, the coloured 'techie' and then doing complicated long-division sums to keep out a number of his dispossessed refuge-seeking brothers. What Mr Stoiber has not been able to explain is why there should be a mathematical equation at all to link the two, considering they have nothing in common except perhaps the colour of their skin.

Of course, Germany's dilemma is not exclusive to it: Declining populations are a pan-European problem. By 2050, Italy for instance, will lose just under a third of its population. In order to maintain adequate number of workers, Italy would need to import more than 350,000 immigrants every year, or else keep its citizens at their jobs until they drop dead naturally or by work-in-

### IN BRIEF

- Germany wants Asian IT workers
- Workforce shortage is a pan-European phenomenon
- They all need immigrants to augment their workforce
- But they don't want other asylum-seekers
- EU, therefore, needs a realistic immigration policy

duced fatigue. At a different, almost farcical level, is the predicament of British fruit farmers, whose strawberries, raspberries and cherries are rotting even as I write, simply because there is a ban on employing asylum-seekers and new limits have been imposed on work permits for foreign students.

So what is to be done? To open the floodgates to wave after wave of war-weary Sri Lankan Tamil, freedom-seeking Chinese, Milosevic-hounded Albanian or Bosnian and anti-Taliban Afghan might be over-generous and would certainly do little to help social cohesion with the host populations. Even the current number of asylum applications — more than 70,000 in the UK last year — provoke daily headlines in local newspapers like the *Dover Express* on the British coast, of the "human sewage" washing up on the shores along with smelly seaweed and empty bottles.

But legal or not, as Jeremy

Harding writes in his new book, *The Uninvited*, will find a way to confound the continent's "project of exclusion". He is unsurprisingly right, of course, having watched poverty-stricken Nigerians hurl themselves at the double-exclusion fence backed with razor wire that marks off the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in Africa, "slashing their legs to shreds" and heedless of the electronic sensors and closed-circuit television meant to protect the vulnerable flank of Fortress Europe. He concludes that those who survive the desert pilgrimages, great sea-crossings and concealed overland journeys in lorries, survive to swell the ranks of illegal immigrants in the EU and it is the survival of the fittest. By his argument, the EU's unsought annual intake of 400,000 illegal immigrant job-seekers, "is among the most highly-motivated potential workforce in Europe".

This plea for greater compassion is fantastic and incurably idealistic for the real world of politics, gross domestic products and social stability. Yet, globalisation cannot expect to be limited to the free movement of capital and must extend to the free movement of people. Hence, a more viable half-way house could be to recognise — as do the Americans — that population flows must find their own level, pooling in conducive conditions. The US has a far more liberal immigration regime than the EU. By the late 1990s, it was taking in about one million immigrants a year — 730,000 legal immigrants, 200,000 illegal aliens and about 100,000 refugees.

The EU, too, needs a more considered policy on selective primary immigration. This would ensure that the legitimate Chinese job-seeker would apply to enter Britain rather than paying exorbitant sums to 'Snakehead' gangs to smuggle him in, concealed behind tomato crates in a refrigerated lorry. This would mean spending far less on processing fake asylum applications and paying for the upkeep of illegal immigrants, who are prohibited from working as they wait to hear what God — and the immigration officials — has in store for them. It is a bit late, at this stage of the EU economy, to implement the slogan of the German Right, "kinder statt Inder" or "children, not Indians". Europe needs immigrants. It just needs to a realistic decision on who and how many.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

22 JUL 2000

**A**DOLF Hitler would hardly have recognised Jörg Haider as a Nazi supporter, whatever some European governments may imagine. The Nazi Party was totalitarian and anti-Semitic, committed to using state power to overthrow the existing order and destroy its supposed racial enemies, including Jews and Slavs. It was radical and aggressive.

There may be some nostalgia for Nazi triumphalism among the older supporters of Haider's Austrian Freedom Party, but, so far as one can tell, it is no more than an old-fashioned nationalist party, opposed to immigration but not anti-Semitic. It is essentially cheerful and defensive. It resembles the far-right parties which have had some success in French and Italian elections, not the Nazis. Haider is no Hitler.

Nevertheless, fear of the charismatic Haider caused the European reaction to this year's coalition between the moderate Austrian Conservative People's Party and the Freedom Party. Under the European treaties, Austria could not be excluded from the official operation of the EU. There would have been no grounds for doing that. Yet the other 14 EU governments have all decided to boycott Austria in bilateral relations. Their action is perhaps illegal, as there is no provision in any of the treaties for this sort of penalty. The boycott was imposed without discussing the legalities; it was led by France and Germany, and followed, perhaps weakly, by Britain. It has now lasted for four months, and looks like becoming a running sore in European relations.

In the past, European countries have been reluctant to



Jörg Haider: no Hitler

interfere in each other's domestic affairs. The other members of the EU were rather pleased when Britain and Ireland decided to bring unrepentant former terrorists into the government of Northern Ireland, though terrorism is plainly anti-democratic. The French and Italian Governments have unreconstructed Communists in their coalitions. Gianfranco Fini, who leads the Italian post-Fascist party, was regarded as an acceptable member of the Berlusconi administration. What is so different about Haider? The difference is that he is an Austrian.

Because of the Holocaust, Europeans have a quite different fear of German or Austrian nationalists from anything they feel about other European nationalist parties. Hitler was an Austrian; Haider is an Austrian. Hitler was a mob orator; Haider is a mob orator. Hitler was a nationalist; Haider is a nationalist. The analysis starts and often stops at that point. Haider has said that Hitler's policy towards unemployment was a success. How shocking. There can be no university in which the professor of economic history does not say the same thing. German rearmament cured unemployment in the mid-1930s; Roosevelt's New Deal did not.

We have, no doubt, to deal with the fact of public perception. The Austrians know that Haider, however shabby, is not Hitler and that the Freedom Party is not the Nazi Party; the further one gets away from Austria, the less people know about Austrian politics. Fear is entirely understandable in Jewish opinion. But a false stereotype of a minor European nationalist politician is a poor basis for European policy.

There are two questions which the boycotting powers have not asked. Why did the Austrian conservative People's Party decide to form a coalition with the Freedom Party? What have been the consequences? After the last Austrian elections, the Conservatives were faced with a situation in which the old Social Democrat-Conservative coalition had become unpopular, as ageing administrations eventually do. Its use of patronage was resented as corrupt; the electors saw that it had become an obstacle to reform.

As a result, Haider's Freedom

# Acting like Nazis over Austria

A false stereotype of a minor European nationalist politician is a poor basis for European policy, writes WILLIAM REES-MOGG

Even then, there would need to be due process of some kind. Yet Austria has committed no breach of democratic legality. The electorate cast roughly a third of its votes for an estab-

lished parliamentary party of which the major European governments do not approve. That is their offence.

The unquestionably democratic conservative People's Party

decided to form a coalition with the Freedom Party. These are perfectly normal democratic events. Austria is economically dependent on Germany, and sympathetic to European integration. So far, Austria has been remarkably patient, hoping that goodwill would lead to a restoration of normal relations. The Austrians could have responded by refusing their own

minimum co-operation to the European process, in the Gaullist style; they may well now be reluctant to co-operate with a hostile French chairmanship. In Britain, our public opinion is not nearly as pro-European as in Austria. We already fear that the EU is undermining our democracy. In the meantime, the British Government is party to an unlawful attempt to coerce the democratic choice of a small European nation. Of course, that has happened before, but not, I think, since 1938.

— *The Times, London*

# A constant in the flux

10-17  
1996

**I**N THE aftermath of the Second World War, the two most belligerent nations of Europe, Germany and Italy, were rendered political dwarves. This was intentional. The victorious powers did not wish unbridled militarism, let alone the horrors of a Nazi-style philosophy, to ever raise its ugly head in Europe again. Both Germany and Italy were denied permanent seats in the U.N. Security Council and several other restrictions were placed on them. The fall of the Berlin Wall, of course, changed all that and in a sense set them both free to pursue more individualistic goals, not necessarily tied to the realities of the Cold War. Re-unification gave Germany the political clout to pursue a dual foreign policy... Italy too has not been inactive. Over the past four or five years it has given its foreign policy new impetus, direction and vigour," says Mr. Bruno Crimi, journalist who writes for the influential Italian weekly, *Panorama*.

Senior officials at La Farnesina (Foreign Ministry) freely admit that the collapse of communism was the most significant event to affect Italy in decades. Not only did it sweep away the old party coalitions, which had governed the country for 40 years, it also diminished the influence wielded by the Vatican through the Christian Democrats who formerly dominated this coalition. The West's main fear, fully shared by the Vatican, was that Italy would go communist through the polls.

"So to keep the communists out, people would hold their noses and vote for the Socialists or Christian Democrats (DC), even though they knew they stank of corruption. But once the communist danger disappeared with the fall of the Wall, there was no need to vote for the DC or the Socialists. Hence Italy's post-communist Revolution, or the Second Republic, as some people call it," says Mr Crimi.

Although the partitocrazia or rule by strong, well-oiled political machines has not been completely eradicated, the political landscape has changed so dramatically over the past decade that the former communists have come to power and have been found wanting, like almost everyone else has been found to be, by an increasingly demanding electorate. Since 1996, when the

**Italy has lurched from one coalition to another, endlessly shuffling and reshuffling the same old cards. The one card which has remained constant in terms of portfolio these past four years is foreign affairs as incarnated by Mr. Lamberto Dini. Vaiju Naravane on Italy's foreign policy interests.**

it," an official told *The Hindu*.

Italy's foreign policy interests in the past were defined as concentric circles beginning with Europe and ending with Asia and Africa with Latin America, the Mediterranean and North America in between. "But we have now come much closer to Asia. We can no longer define spheres of interest the way we did before. Latin America is important and will continue to be important because a large percentage of the population of Brazil and Argentina is of Italian origin. But tomorrow's markets lie more in Asia than in Latin America," he said.

Since January 2000, the Foreign Ministry, which was organised vertically, has created crosscutting regional divisions along geographical lines. Under Mr. Dini, Italy has adopted a forthright tone it rarely used in the past and shown a new

peacekeeping and humanitarian missions across the world. This has the added advantage of strengthening Italy's position on the enlargement of the Security Council. With formidable opponents like Japan and Germany lined up, Italy has decided it is against any addition of permanent seats with veto powers.

Instead, it would like to see the Council strength enlarged to about 25, with some weighing mechanism which would favour those who pay more. Italy is the U.N.'s fifth largest contributor. So, while Mr. Dini says he has no problem treating India on a par with Germany or Japan, he hastens to clarify that that said, Italy is opposed to any new permanent member.

Italy has increasingly turned its attention to the Mediterranean region, the Adriatic and the Balkans. "The



Mr. Lamberto Dini

## POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

Restructuring of the Foreign Ministry which has been organised along geographical lines for communication and exchange.

Proactive initiatives towards countries like Libya, Iran, Afghanistan and North Korea.

Making Italy a facilitator, if not mediator, in the eyes of developing countries.

Insistence on foreign policy being anchored in moral principles, respect for democracy and human rights.

Greater recognition of regions, notably Asia, not considered spheres of interest in the past.

centre-left Olive Tree Alliance was elected, Italy has had three governments, making a post-war total of 58. It has lurched from one coalition to another, endlessly shuffling and reshuffling the same old cards. The one card which has remained constant in terms of portfolio these past four years is foreign affairs as incarnated by Mr. Lamberto Dini.

"Dini remaining in office for four years has been crucial to re-shaping Italy's foreign policy. Continuity has meant the elaboration of a global strategy and the physical restructuring of the ministry in accordance with

assertiveness in its approach to countries once considered untouchables by the West — Iran, Libya, North Korea and Afghanistan.

With the exception of shortlived and sometimes disastrous colonial adventures in Albania, Ethiopia, Somalia, Libya and Eritrea, Italy does not have heavy colonial baggage, making it more acceptable as a neutral facilitator or mediator in the eyes of developing countries, or so goes the rationale of Italy's new geo-political strategists.

The country is therefore investing heavily in

fall of communism has given rise to many new challenges which call for innovation and imagination. We are now confronted with immigration, organised crime, rogue states, nationalism of varying shades and hues, and a constructive dialogue based on two fundamental principles — respect for democracy and human rights — is the way forward," says a policy planner.

Perhaps that is why Italy recently gently but firmly told Pakistan's military ruler that a General for an ambassador would really not do. Not in the new Italy at least.

# Vienna smarting under sanctions

By Vaiju Naravane

VIENNA, JUNE 19. Austria is still stung by diplomatic sanctions imposed on it by the other 14 members of the European Union on February 4, when the extreme right, anti-immigrant and xenophobic Freedom Party (FPO) became part of Austria's ruling conservative coalition.

While sanctions will be discussed at the European Union summit being held in the Portuguese town of Santa Maria de Feira, it is unlikely they will be lifted.

Austria has called for the measures to be lightened or loosened before France takes over the rotating six-month presidency of the E.U. and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, has multiplied trips to various European capitals in recent weeks in order to mobilise public opinion against sanctions.

The sanctions have meant that there have been no bilateral or diplomatic contacts between Austria and the other 14 E.U. countries. This has not affected Austria financially and has not resulted in a change of its status at the E.U. But it has spelt humiliation and painful ostracism from the other 14.

Contrary to E.U. expectations, Austria has not hung its head in shame. Instead, European leaders

have been appalled by the tough line taken by Vienna. Chancellor Schussel has now said that unless sanctions are lifted, Austria will hold a referendum in autumn on its continued membership of the E.U. and that in the interim period it would obstruct E.U. decision-making. As expected, the worst of the rhetoric has come from Mr. Jorg Haider, whose populism, and personal charisma were largely responsible for making the FPO Austria's third most important political party.

He called the French President, Mr. Jacques Chirac, a loser and a

## INSIDE AUSTRIA — I

"Pocket Napoleon" and enraged other Europeans with similar caustic provocations. Mr. Haider has since resigned as Chairman of the party and returned to the province of Carinthia of which he is Governor. However, it is clear that he has not slackened his grip on power and continues to dominate the FPO Ministers in the coalition Cabinet.

Mr. Aleksander Van der Bellen, who is head of Austria's Green Party, told *The Hindu* in an exclusive interview in Vienna: "Jorg Haider has made the situation extremely difficult. He has rejected

the proposal of a monitoring mechanism and although he has resigned as Chairman of the FPO, he continues to call the shots from behind the scenes. Haider does everything he can to ruin every single diplomatic effort so we must conclude that sanctions are to his advantage and he does not want them to end."

Mr. Vander Bellen said that even if he sympathised with the E.U.'s decision to apply sanctions against his country, the way in which it was done has "left a bad taste in the mouth." He said: "While imposing sanctions nobody thought about the exit scenario or how long they would last. This cannot be allowed to happen again and the E.U. needs a procedure based on legal values. The country accused should have the right to be heard and in this case Austria was not given a hearing."

Austria is pressing for sanctions to be loosened now, while Portugal is still the head of the E.U., because it fears French intransigence after Paris takes over the presidency on July 1. But the Portuguese Prime Minister, Mr. Antonio Guterres, dashed hopes for an early resolution when he said: "We will not discuss this in Feira because this is not a E.U. matter."

The decision to impose a diplomatic boycott against Austria was

never brought up in the E.U. because Austria, which is a full member, could have vetoed it. E.U. decisions must be taken unanimously. France and Belgium have been prime movers behind the sanctions. But other countries such as Britain and Germany have gone along.

Italy, which has two major extreme right wing parties who are likely to be part of the country's next post-electoral government, is visibly uncomfortable with sanctions. Benito Mussolini's former Nazi party MSO has been renamed the *Allianza Nazionale* and is now led by Mr. Gianfranco Fini. The *Lega Nord*, another extreme right wing anti-immigrant party led by Mr. Umberto Bossi, is also likely to become a coalition partner of Mr. Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* party when country goes to the polls next year.

THE HINDU

20 JUN 2000

## *mfb* Austria blocks key E.U. tax package *HP-17*

**FEIRA (PORTUGAL), JUNE 20.** Austria, already the bad boy of the European Union, single-handedly blocked a long-sought pan-European tax package today by refusing to withdraw its veto of a key component despite a last-ditch pressure play by its 14 partners.

In an unscheduled meeting today on the last day of an E.U. mid-year summit here, the Finance Ministers threw up their hands and acknowledged failure, E.U. sources said. It was their fourth session in less than two days aimed at hammering out an ac-

cord on what has been the most vexing and intractable fiscal problem facing the E.U., spanning two years and four rotating presidencies.

Today's failure meant France will have the problem dumped in its lap when it takes the presidency in 10 days, as Portugal did from Finland last January 1.

It also meant that a far broader pan-European tax package, the logical sequel to the common market and currency, would remain on hold for at least another six months. Austria said "no" to a last-minute Portuguese-drawn

tax compromise between countries that want withholding tax on non-resident savings income, and those countries that favour an exchange of tax information among E.U. Governments.

An exchange of information would effectively kill the concept of banking secrecy, the bedrock of the private banking that is big business in Austria and Luxembourg. Both countries had been opposing the plan before Luxembourg finally gave into pressure from the other 13, leaving Austria the only holdout.

Austria is already fighting an

uphill battle for a lifting of bilateral political sanctions imposed by its 14 partners last February in protest at the inclusion of the far-right Freedom Party in its coalition Government.

And E.U. sources here said it was not unthinkable that Vienna might use its tax veto as leverage.

Sources also were concerned that if the sanctions lingered, Austria's veto might pop up in other areas, notably the intergovernmental conference that is forging institutional changes needed to accommodate the E.U.'s historic eastward expansion. — AFP

21 JUN 20

100-17  
2/1/6

# Haider playing on Austrians' sentiments: Green Party

Europe

By Vajju Naravane

**VIENNA, JUNE 20.** Vienna is always imperial and imperious. But under the summer sun, with the air full of the scent of linden flowers, the city appears to unbend, lose some of its frosty formality. Tourists throng the museums, the Kartner Strasse is jammed with women wearing summer frocks shopping for swimming wear, street musicians set up a curious cacophony where strains of jazz mingle with snatches of opera, while the cafes do brisk business serving tankards of beer, and creamy coffee to accompany the rich pastry concoctions only the Viennese can conjure up.

The inside of the Parliament building is a study in contrast. Wood-panelled, with high ceiling, formal, forbidding. One of the only politicians to command almost universal respect and unrestrained liking is the Green Party leader, Mr. Aleksander Van der Bellen. In his late 40's, burly, beginning to run to fat, he chainsmokes his way through an hour-long conversation about Austria, Mr. Joerg Haider and the need for his country to examine its Nazi past. The Green Party came out of last October's election with five additional seats in Parliament. Opinion polls say its popularity continues to increase. In contrast, the Freedom Party of Mr. Joerg Haider has begun to slump in the polls.

Excerpts from the interview:

**The Hindu: What is your opinion of Mr. Joerg Haider?**

Haider has made the situation extremely difficult. He has rejected the proposal of a monitoring mechanism. He still calls the shots even from behind the scenes. Since January, Haider has made the situation very critical, calling Chirac a pocket Napoleon and a loser. And now he's proposing that any Austrian elected official who criticises Austria abroad should be stripped of his immunity and tried under the penal code which has a proviso for insults against the republic. This is the point of view of a totalitarian person. He continues to

be very influential and is still a member of the coalition committee. Haider does everything he can to ruin every single diplomatic effort, so we must conclude that sanctions are to his advantage and he does not want them to end. All this shows that if he could, he would establish a totalitarian state. He wants to clamp down on all criticism. He has no barriers, no internal barriers that tell him what is possible in a democracy and what is not. And again he plays on the strings of the Austrian soul. There are certain people who believe that the Government should govern and that others should follow quietly and shut up.

**Has Green Party not lost some of its base to Mr. Haider?**

Haider is a genius at adapting to any audience he is addressing and although he is 50, he can behave like a 30-year-old and he drives a

## INSIDE AUSTRIA — II

Porche. I think it is a Diana effect. Simple people who have no money who still read every article about Diana — how many cars and jewels she had and how much she spent on dresses and without any jealousy whatsoever — living vicariously. And Haider manages to have the same psychological effect on people.

**How do you interpret Mr. Haider's decision to resign from the chairmanship of the Freedom Party?**

The Freedom Party had this image of being the party of the small people, low income, less than average education. That's where they drew their numbers. People are now irritated. Haider is the Freedom Party, but he is not in Government. He is in Carinthia. People don't know what he is up to. The Government is taking decisions which are unpopular with belt-tightening measures. So Haider has distanced himself from the Government. But will that strategy work? Do they have the stamina and the staying power until the next national elections which are in October 2003? In-between there are local elections in Vienna next year and that is important. The first thing is how will they behave and secondly what happens if they lose? After Lower Austria where they have unleashed a campaign of hate, the FPÖ in Vienna is the second-worst. Last year their campaign in Vienna was anti-immigrant and nasty and appealed to the lowest possible sentiments.

**What do you think the arrival of the FPÖ to power has done psychologically to this country? Has it brought something out in the open which had remained underground?**

Yes and no. It's an ambivalent thing. Yes, because I think that during these past years it has become possible to say things in public which I consider impossible in a decent country. Personally, I have been confronted four or five times with Nazi comments. In the street, on the telephone, or on some of those phone-in interviews. I remember a discussion with an elderly man and him saying, "all foreigners should be shot." On a computer chat forum, a real Nazi came in seven or eight times and they were unable to throw him out. Or the Vienna campaign of the Freedom Party. Or what happened just two weeks ago in Lower Austria when the new Governor used a Nazi slogan during one of his meetings. So it has brought a lot of anti-foreign and anti-Jewish sentiment to the surface.

It has broken taboos. Austria must examine its past. This country has a victim complex and the extreme right plays on that. The Austrian population has been brought up to believe that the world is against us. First, in 1918 we lost the empire. Then we became the "victims" of the Nazis in 1938. Then as of 1945 came the occupation by the Allied Powers. So this myth of a small but courageous people fighting all odds has to be broken up and re-examined. The sanctions have put the population firmly behind Haider and Chancellor Schüssel. So in the climate of angry nationalism such an examination cannot take place.



10-17 22/6

# Non-party initiative to fight Freedom Party

Europe

By Vaiju Narayane

VIENNA, JUNE 21. Opposite the offices of the Foreign Ministry in Vienna, a strange embassy has sprung up since February this year. It is small, unpretentious and housed in a white tent covered with colourful activist posters. The "Embassy of Concerned Citizens" was opened at Ballhausplatz on February 9. The 'Embassy's' everyday activities are run by people who do not feel represented by the new Austrian Government and who would like to see the back of the extreme right wing Freedom Party now in power.

Sofia Antonulas, journalist, who was one of its founders told *The Hindu*: "We needed a place where people could talk, express their disgust at the turn the situation has taken. Ours is a non-party initiative unaffiliated to any movement and we want people to act as an ambassador in their own right. The embassy is a centre for protest and a place for networking. I am glad the European Union has decided to maintain sanctions. That is what is needed, to keep the pressure up," says Sofia referring to the decision in Portugal by the E.U. not to lift bilateral diplomatic sanctions against Austria.

Every Thursday, several thousand people gather around the tent to stage demonstrations against the presence of the FPO in the Government. "In the beginning there were as many as 100,000 persons every Thursday. Now the numbers have dwindled to about

10,000. But even so, the ring road is practically blocked each week. We are advocating further peaceful protests and we shall remain open 24 hours a day as long as this Government remains in office," says Sofia.

"Many people are afraid of totalitarianism. All those Nazi words and slogans coming back from the past. We don't want that. Its frightening."

## INSIDE AUSTRIA — III

Anna is a young student volunteer. She says she works sometimes with an organisation called MitMensch, a word which Italy's Nobel prize winning holocaust writer Primo Levy described, not without irony as: "The co-man, the human being of flesh and blood standing before us, within reach of our providentially myopic senses." The organisation fights discrimination of every sort and tries to help those in distress. Over the past year, the number of complaints about racist behaviour has soared, Anna says.

"It is true that the atmosphere, particularly here in Vienna, has become particularly poisonous. For instance, the Freedom Party claims that in certain districts in Vienna there is no place for Austrian children in schools because they are full to capacity with immigrant children — Turks, Bosnians and Yugoslavs, mainly. Albanians too. But that is because the housing policies which were fol-

lowed by the city authorities were so skewed. They put all the immigrants together in certain localities. They did not want the immigrants to mix, to harmonise. So now there is a lack of balance. But this can be rectified by changing the housing policy," says Ms. Friederike Leibl who works for the daily *Die Presse*. She is of the opinion that these elections will remain a watershed in modern Austrian history.

"Something snapped in the psychology of this country. It has been building up for a time but this past year one could really feel Haider's popularity mounting. And then people started coming out with terrible things about Jews and foreigners. There was more self-control before. Now they feel its quite alright to say all that in the open. We have never done our *mea culpa* like the Germans did. We had the opportunity when the whole Kurt Waldheim scandal broke — (he had been a soldier in Hitler's army but forgot to mention it when interviewed for the United Nations of which he became Secretary-General) but Austrians never took it, preferring to believe that the world was picking on us. If we were intelligent as a people we would seize this new opportunity to do some introspections, look at our past dispassionately. But in Austria we live on myths and I am afraid that such a questioning will not take place. If that happens what will be the future? Too scary to contemplate," she says.

(Concluded)

22 JUN 2000

22 JUN 2000

# The euro stoops to conquer

HD-17  
25/6

**T**HE NEARLY 18-month-old euro is still a flickering star on the international monetary horizon with long dips and modest highs. Its recent recovery of seven per cent, in the background of its all-time low, 22 per cent loss of value against the dollar, could now dispel the concern at the health of the young currency launched on January 1, 1999. The new-found optimism may challenge gathering perceptions of a euro doomed to a perpetual weakness against the dollar.

The current perception in the European Central Bank (ECB) is that the "euro is not weak but dollar is overvalued." The prospects of a much-heralded correction on the U.S. stock market will ensure that the dollar loses ground to the euro. It is now trading in the mid-nineties range, i.e., one euro to 95 cents.

The officials at the bank argue that "the longer we stay in the mid-nineties against the dollar, the less likely intervention becomes." The prospects of ECB intervention are not welcome news in the background of Euroland's lower unemployment and higher consumer confidence data. Business confidence in West Germany — E.U.'s locomotive economy — rose to a nine-year high in May.

This has aroused expectations of a further rate increase by the ECB. Euro-enthusiasts in financial markets say that once the euro interest rates are "matched" with the dollar interest rate — "the fizz from dollar may suddenly disappear."

The much-dreaded, hypothetical scenario of challenges posed by a sudden market correction in the U.S. stock market could have serious consequences for the value of the dollar. Such speculation has prompted some financial analysts to put the value of the euro at the 1.25 dollar mark, suggesting a nine to 10 per cent appreciation in the original euro value against the dollar.

But it is also ironical that a weak euro and a gradual rise in global demand for goods and services have not only filled euro-zone order books but also helped to bolster manufacturing confidence and investment. The euro-zone stock markets, according to more optimistic analysts, are poised for a major takeoff.

The euro-zone economists have concluded that strengthening economic growth in the euro-zone area will prompt the ECB to raise the euro interest rates to 4.5 per cent later this year — and this would be the sixth rate rise since November — as the euro-zone politicians are consistently emphasising the need for a strong euro which would guarantee price stability.

The saga of euro-launch will end in July 2002 when euro currency notes

*The Euro's recent recovery against the mighty dollar may dispel the concern at its health. BATUK GATHANI on the bright outlook for the young, single European currency.*

and coins come in circulation. The 12 national currencies and coins which now constitute euro will cease to be legal tender in Euroland. It has a population of 302 millions and comprises 12 out of 15 E.U. member-states.

Britain, Sweden and Denmark remain out of the European Monetary Union (EMU) and euro for domestic political reasons. This week, Greece met all economic criteria to technically qualify for EMU membership.

For India, the euro has a special significance. Apart from its exporters being able to invoice their goods and services in this currency, the corporate sector will have an opportunity to raise low interest euro capital for modernisation and expansion.

The E.U. is India's second largest trading partner — after the U.S. — and currently accounts for about 30 per cent of India's exports and imports.

The Indian share of the E.U. global trade is very modest. It hovers round half per cent and hence it is often argued that the E.U. is more important to India than India is to the E.U. But the E.U. is indispensable for India to improving its global trade profile.

India's current trade with the E.U. stands at \$21 billion per annum. This is four times less than China's tradewith the E.U. But, with the E.U.'s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) nudging towards the \$7 trillion-mark, there is a huge trade and investment potential for



A giant Euro banknote...promising currency.

Within this decade, the E.U. will border with Russia in the east and Turkey in the south. The European Union Club may then comprise 25 to 30 members, say in the next two decades. All this would lead to the evolution of a true pan-European economy. At the microeconomic level, the euro, in tandem with the all powerful and independent ECB, will exercise formidable monetary and budgetary discipline.

This could pave the way for major structural reforms which will stimulate economic growth, create more wealth and employment in the E.U. In the process, the euro may soon emerge as the second largest international reserve currency, after the dollar.

both the E.U. and India. India has three times E.U. population.

According to the Union Bank of Switzerland, while India is the 16th largest economy by conventional measures, it is the sixth biggest economy in "purchasing power parity" (PPP) terms — after the U.S., China, Japan, Russia and Germany.

India is Asia's third largest economy and it is also a vibrant democracy, buttressed by the rule of law and a relatively free market economy. It is in this background that the relative health of the euro has some significance for India.

25 JUN 2000

# Atal promises reform minus roadblocks

FROM DIPTOSH MAJUMDAR

Lisbon, June 27: Heralding a brave new India, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today unveiled the country's blueprint for a more liberal economic regime before a gathering of Europe's corporate czars.

As part of the new era, Vajpayee said he would constitute a "Joint Government Industry Group" for the twin purposes of removing bottlenecks from sanctioned projects and ensuring speedy approval for foreign direct investment.

In an effort to accelerate the funds flow into the country, the Prime Minister said that the group could also include foreign industrialists who are finding it difficult to overcome procedural hurdles.

For once, the government dealt with specifics and emphasised on the need to smoothen the rough edges that make doing business with India difficult.

Vajpayee came to the meet, attended by over 250 industrialists from across the continent, with a detailed basket of offers and requests.

"While the EU stands to benefit from cooperation in the rapidly expanding and equally rapidly evolving information technology sector, India looks towards European investment in critical areas like infrastructure and financial services. Both sides stand to gain from sharing their experience and expertise in the emerging knowledge-based industries like pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and research and development," he said.

The Prime Minister sought more investment in the infrastructure sector, which he described as a high-priority area. He focused on his ambitious highway programme, which, he said, would cost around \$11 billion.

He also sold the idea of opening up the ports to foreign investment

and informed the gathering of the steps taken to corporatise some "important" harbours. These include the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, and the ports in Haldia, Ennore, Mangalore, Goa and Tuticorin.

"We welcome private sector participation in the modernisation of ports," Vajpayee said and pointed to the legislation cleared by Parliament for joint ventures between Indian and foreign ports.

Vajpayee also spoke of the government's divestment plans and listed the companies in which the state has decided to shed its stake.

He said five airports will be leased out on a long-term basis when the new civil aviation policy is chalked out.

Similarly, Vajpayee added, the telecom sector is being opened up. An independent regulatory structure has been put in place to ensure a level playing field and a new law, based on the principles of convergence, is being worked out by a high-powered group.

Vajpayee disclosed that a report titled "Hydrocarbon — Vision 2025" is being prepared that lays down a regulatory framework and a progressive policy on deregulation for greater investment in the oil and gas sector.

With an eye on his allies opposed to the fast-paced reforms programme, Vajpayee said the divestment process would be a calibrated one.

"In the absence of social security and state-funded unemployment benefits, we will have to ensure that the interests of the workers is fully protected," he said.

"We will do this through a combination of measures and suitable incentives like a generous voluntary retirement scheme and employees stock option scheme. We will use the equity of valuable unused urban land of our own state-owned enterprises to finance a social safety net for workers and employees," the Prime Minister added.

THE TELEGRAPH

28 JUN 2000

# Ulster may have its Assembly by May 22

By Thomas Abraham

LONDON, MAY 6. The British and Irish Governments have announced a breakthrough in their efforts to resolve the crisis over the Northern Ireland peace agreement and have set a new deadline for the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to disarm.

After talks with his Irish counterpart, the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, said the two Governments intended to restore the Assembly in Northern Ireland by May 22 if there was a positive response from the province's political parties and the paramilitaries. The peace process has been in a stalemate since the beginning of this year when the British Government suspended the Stormont Executive in response to a threat from the main Protestant party, the Ulster Unionists, to walk out of the Government if the IRA did not lay down its arms. The suspension of the Government, in turn, infuriated the IRA and its political wing Sinn Fein.

Mr. Blair and his Irish counterpart, Mr. Bertie Ahern, have pushed back till June 2001 the deadline of May 22 for the IRA and other paramilitaries to disarm. Also, in a concession to the IRA, the disarmament has been linked with the reduction of British forces in Northern Ireland. Both the Prime Ministers said it was now up to the IRA and the major parties to respond to these proposals. In particular, the

IRA should give a clear commitment that it would lay down its weapons.

A joint statement by the British and Irish Governments called on the IRA and other armed groups to "urgently state clearly that they will put their arms completely and clearly beyond use." Until now the IRA has never stated in so many words that it will disarm. It has, however, said so indirectly, by expressing support for the Good Friday Agreement.

The Irish Taoiseach, Mr. Ahern, expressed confidence that the IRA would respond positively. "I will be disappointed if the response from the paramilitaries is not extremely positive," he said. The Sinn Fein leader, Mr. Gerry Adams' initial response was positive. "I think it is a very decisive moment, the two Governments have agreed to re-establish the institutions and have set out the mechanisms and the steps necessary for full implementation of many of the outstanding aspects of the (peace) accord."

Mr. John Hume, the leader of the SDLP, the largest Catholic party, welcomed the two Governments' decision to restore the Assembly and set a deadline for the implementation of all the elements of the peace agreement. The Ulster Unionists, led by Mr. David Trimble, were, however, silent on the proposals. The Unionists have demanded that the IRA should begin to lay down its weapons or at least unveil a clear time-table for arms decommissioning.

ing. Until such time, they have said they will not sit in government with Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing. Mr. Trimble, who was challenged for the party leadership by a headline anti-peace agreement opponent two months ago, may find it difficult to persuade his party to budge from its current stand.

Both Governments appear confident that the IRA can be persuaded to provide a clear indication that it intends to lay down its weapons. The British Government is expected to meet IRA demands for troop reductions and take steps to reform the police force in Northern Ireland in exchange for IRA decommissioning.

One of the key demands that Sinn Fein has made is a reform of Northern Ireland's police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The RUC is a largely Protestant force and the Catholics tend to see it as partisan. A government commission has suggested whole-scale reforms to the service, including changing its name. The Unionists and other Protestant parties are, however, completely opposed to any changes to the force.

## IRA ready to disarm?

Reuters reports from Belfast:

The IRA announced today that it was ready to start a process that would put its weapons in Northern Ireland beyond use, the BBC reported.

THE HINDU

1 MAY 2001

# Will the Gauls have the guile?

1415 HD-17  
*Europe needs determination and vision and lacks both. Will the French presidency be able to give the Old Continent a nudge in the right direction?*  
VAIJU NARAVANE reports.

THE FREE fall of the Euro against the dollar has sent Europe into a tizzy. Though most European economies appear to be doing well, the weakness of the Euro is a symptom of the uncertainty which dogs the process of European integration and construction. As it enters its 50th year, Europe faces challenges and problems it has never confronted: enlargement, a reform of its institutions, defence policy, foreign policy, the adoption of a European rights charter, and the tantalising idea of a constitution.

Not a single innovative idea has been launched since the Euro was adopted by 11 countries, and the much-awaited "institutional big bang" that the currency was to have created has failed to materialise. Pious declarations to the contrary, the old debate between sovereignty and supra-nationality continues to grip the Old Continent with the result that Europe has stepped into the new millennium in a mood at once hesitant and wary.

The French presidency of the European Union, which begins on July 1 and runs through until the end of December, therefore comes at a particularly sensitive and delicate moment. Mistakes at this juncture could jeopardise the future of Europe. France's presidency will be capped by the Nice summit and a failure to obtain significant results there, at the end of discussions on the Union's institutional reform, will put a brake on the entire process of European construction.

For France itself, this particular presidency of the E.U. is full of challenges and pitfalls. The Franco-German tandem, which for several decades was the powerhouse of Europe, is no longer as close or cosy. Europe itself has become more open and less "manageable" or pliant since France's last shot at the presidency and French leaders will have to show infinite tact and diplomacy to bring recalcitrant members on board. France also approaches



France's President, Mr. Jacques Chirac (left), and Prime Minister, Mr. Lionel Jospin, flank the country's football coach, Mr. Aimé Jacquet, as they celebrate the 1998 World Cup triumph... will the same spirit prevail at the E.U.?

this presidency at a crucial moment in its own political cycle. A presidential election is on the cards two years down the line and both Mr. Jacques Chirac, the country's conservative President, and Mr. Lionel Jospin, the socialist Prime Minister, have their political futures in mind as they make their every move. Fortunately for France, both leaders who are passionate believers in the pursuit of European integration have so far refrained from allowing their rivalry to contaminate the debate.

While Mr. Jospin chose May 9, the E.U.'s 50th birthday, to present his vision of European construction, Mr. Chirac made his views known a few days earlier. Once more, Mr. Chirac used a discourse which has stood him in good stead in the past, stressing human values over the imperatives of economic gain. The well-being of each of its citizens should be at the centre of Europe's preoccupations, he said. "With the adoption, hopefully, of the fundamental rights charter, the French presidency will put together principles and values as a basis for the Europe of tomorrow. The changing world calls for a new type of solidarity. We need Europe to help us be more coherent and efficient," Mr. Chirac said.

Mr. Jospin was less philosophical, more brisk and businesslike. "The real challenge is the unifica-

tion of Europe," he said. "Institutional reform and the enlargement of Europe will be the dominant themes of the French presidency and while there is no question of slowing down enlargement, there is no question either of jumping a couple of stages," he said. European institutions do not function well and need overhauling. They will be even less well adapted to service the needs of over 20 member-states. Which is why institutional reform should take precedence over enlargement, Mr. Jospin explained.

The minimum objectives of the inter-Governmental conference, which opened under the current Portuguese presidency at the beginning of this year and is expected to conclude at the end of the year with France in the chair, have been hanging fire for the last three years. And although all European leaders speak of the need for transparency, democracy and a certain closeness to the citizen, their dream appears more distant by the day.

The main questions the inter-governmental conference is expected to resolve are those concerning the composition of the European Commission in Brussels which cannot be inflated each time a new member is inducted, the redistribution of voting rights within the Commission and a move away from the system

of consensus and towards a majority vote in the decision-making process.

Europe does not have a constitution. The structure, aims and goals of the E.U. are to be found in several treaties and documents adopted over time as it has evolved. Can and will the Europeans continue to make do with this morass of documents governing their institutions or should they start a process for the adoption of a proper constitution? The former Commission President, Mr. Jacques Delors, described Europe as "a non-identified institutional object" and an increasing number of personalities feel that the institutional patchwork has reached its limit and should be replaced by a constitution spelling out the rights and responsibilities of citizens and states, describing and defining institutions and structures.

Europe appears to be going through a mid-life crisis and the oft-repeated question seems to be Whither Europe? The end of the Cold War and the fall of communism have brought an unexpectedly large number of candidates knocking on the door. The 15 current members are baulking at the cost and constraints of allowing new entrants. Europe needs determination and vision and lacks both. Will the French presidency be able to give the Old Continent a nudge in the right direction?

1 MAY 2 PM

10 MAY 2 PM

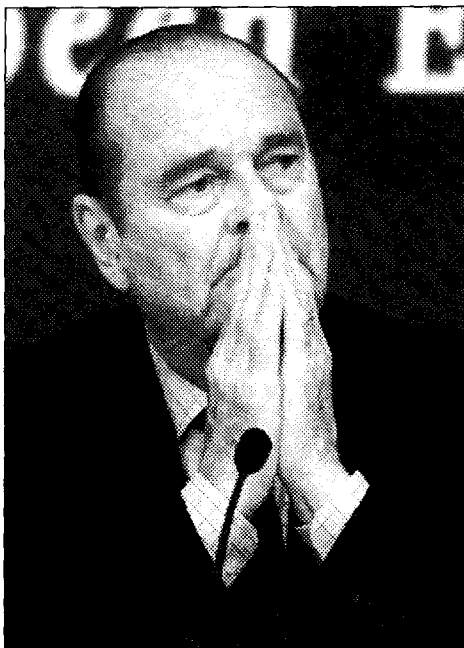
11 MAY 2 PM

# Shadow-boxing

HD-17

Mr. Chirac and Mr. Jospin are almost certain candidates for the next French presidential election scheduled for 2002. The municipal elections are a sort of dress rehearsal for what is to follow, says VAIJU NARAVANE.

9/4



The French President, Mr. Jacques Chirac... striving to stay on top.

going on strike — nurses, taxmen, teachers and postal workers. Mr. Jospin was obliged to sack his highly unpopular Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Mr. Claude Allegre, and change the Ministers of Finance and Industry and Culture.

The result, of course, has been that Mr. Chirac's fortunes have begun to look up again, while Mr. Jospin's image has taken quite a battering. All the opinion polls conducted in March indicate that Mr. Chirac's popularity rating has gone up four points while that of Mr. Jospin has slipped by two percentage points.

For the first time since June 1997, when Mr. Jospin was installed at the Matignon Palace as France's Prime Minister, he is trailing Mr. Chirac in the polls.

However, Mr. Chirac has been able to draw little consolation from this new development. "A majority continues to approve of the Government's work and the Cabinet reshuffle went down very well. This has proved disappointing to the President who had hoped to draw more mileage out of the fact that Mr. Jospin had to bring back supporters of the late Françoise Mitterrand such as Mr. Jack Lang who has been given the touchy Education portfolio or Mr. Laurant Fabius who is now looking after Finance and Industry," says a commentator, Mr. Alain Duhamel.

While the French like Mr. Chirac and respect his position as the Head of State, they feel he does not have a vision for the future the way Mr. Jospin does. The Prime Minister is seen as a rigorous, clever, intellectual — somewhat humourless but what the country needs.

Mr. Chirac is perceived as "Mr. Nice Guy" — warm-hearted, likeable but lacking Mr. Jospin's vision. However, the President's popularity with the French remains the Conservatives' biggest ace and most right-wing politicians agree that to win the municipal elections, they cannot do without Mr. Chirac on the campaign trail.

So much depends on the conservatives winning the municipal elections that Mr. Chirac is not being coy about calling the shots. Mr. Seguin is the only serious contender who can hope to carry off Paris City Hall, the cherry on the cake, from under the nose of Mr. Delanoë, that Mr. Chirac is making no secret of his support for him.

Mr. Chirac and Mr. Jospin are almost certain candidates for the next presidential election scheduled for 2002. The municipal elections are a sort of dress rehearsal for what is to follow. They are in any case a clear indication of which way public sentiment is going.

Polls indicate that the French are pretty much fed up of the internecine quarrels of the French Right. Mr. Chirac has realised that unless some form of unity can be imposed upon a bunch of pettily squabbling parties, the Right will remain discredited in the eyes of the voters. He has, therefore, decided to take the initiative to become the rallying point for the conservatives.

"WE HAVE quite a panoply of conservative candidates to choose from this time," said Mr.

Cedric Chevet, a municipal clerk, with an arch look at the Hotel de Ville, the Paris Mayor's sumptuous edifice. "It's going to be an interesting election. The city's budget is huge, the job is prestigious and is seen as a stepping-stone to bigger political rewards. It served President Jacques Chirac as a trampoline in his leap towards the Elysee Palace so it's not surprising that anyone harbouring dreams of one day becoming President of France has his eye trained this way. What with the scandals we have had, the internecine quarrels that are going on and the stakes involved, it's going to be highly entertaining," he says with a malicious grin.

Earlier this week, the former French Prime Minister, Mr. Eduard Balladur, announced that he too is a candidate in the Paris mayoral race, bringing the number of prominent right-wingers to half a dozen, including such political heavyweights as Mr. Philippe Seguin, former Minister and Speaker, the current

Mayor, Mr. Jean Tiberi, and the former conservative Minister, Mr. Françoise de Panafieu. The Socialist challenge is being led by Mr. Bernard Delanoë who is already a councillor in Paris.

Certainly one of the hallmarks of the Paris mayoral race is raw political ambition. Nevertheless, the municipal election, particularly the jostle for the French capital's highest post, is also a precursor to bigger events. Municipal polls serve as a test for the mood of the electorate, giving a taste of what lies in store, especially by way of power shifts and political re-alignments.

In these days of co-habitation — France is led by a conservative President, Mr. Jacques Chirac, and a Socialist Prime Minister, Mr. Lionel Jospin — the French voter has taken a perverse delight in measuring up one leader against the other, keeping them both permanently guessing as to their place in his affections.

For many months, Mr. Jospin had the upper hand. His Government passed the 100-day test with flying colours and each triumph for Mr. Jospin meant a dent in Mr. Chirac's popularity. Until a couple of months ago, it seemed that Mr. Jospin could do no wrong while Chirac, as Mr. Chirac is familiarly called, could not get his act together. The economy was doing beautifully, the coalition appeared harmonious and the French Left wore the glow bestowed by popular approbation.

Then came a series of reverses for Mr. Jospin. He tried to set his own personal stamp on France's foreign policy in West Asia during a recent trip to Israel and Lebanon but was greeted with a hail of stones by angry Palestinian students and ended up being severely rapped on the knuckles for meddling in what is generally believed to be the special preserve of the President.

Then public sector employees began

THE HINDU

APR 2001

MARCH 2001

# Greece closer to E.U. with Simitis' election

**ATHENS, APRIL 10.** Mr. Costas Simitis, who won a second mandate as the Greek Prime Minister yesterday, is a tested leader who brought Greece to the brink of joining Europe's monetary union and improved relations with arch-rival Turkey.

Slight of build and seemingly shy, Mr. Simitis, 64, is a methodical worker who changed the face of his Pasok party from a die-hard socialist group in the 1980s to a market-oriented centrist party. In his first term as Prime Minister he managed to slash towering State debts and double-digit inflation, all-but officially securing Greece's participation in the eurozone as of January next year.

The tasks before Mr. Simitis remain large. For the next four years he has promised 300,000 new jobs and growth rates of about four per cent to be met through a bold privatisation programme in telecommunications, energy and banking. A German- and British-trained economist and university professor, Mr. Simitis succeeded the ailing party founder and three-time Premier Andreas Papandreu in January 1996. He swept to power eight months later in elections with a comfortable margin over the new democracy



**The Greek Prime Minister, Mr. Costas Simitis, waves to supporters before declaring a razor-thin victory over conservative opponents in Athens on Monday.** — AP

conservatives. Unpretentious but self-confident, he dislikes the flamboyant style of traditional Greek political leaders and is said to treat his Ministers like students, praising them for doing their work or criticising them for failure.

"During Cabinet meetings he often tells a Minister that his work is below expectations. He de-

style is dry. He is a private man, who rarely drinks alcohol, enjoys theatre and cinema but mostly prefers to stay home after work with a good book. "My dream is to get Greece out of the Balkan misery and make it part of the developed group of European nations. In my first term we took the first steps but there is much more that needs to be done," he said in television interview before the elections.

Mr. Simitis is the son of a Piraeus lawyer and grew up in a well-off, progressive family, where the first seeds of his leftist views were sown. He left home at 18 to study law and economics in Germany and did post-graduate work at the London School of Economics. He has worked as a lawyer and also taught law and economics in Germany. Simitis opposed the military junta which seized power in 1967 and was a founding member of Papandreu's Pasok when the regime fell in 1974. During the junta, Mr. Simitis escaped to Germany on a false passport while his wife was arrested and put in isolation. He was convicted in absentia for his opposition to the dictators. — Reuters

mands progress reports and sets deadlines. If a target is met he grins with satisfaction and moves along to another issue," a top Simitis aide told Reuters. Greece no longer E.U.'s black sheep under his leadership. It shed its image as the black sheep of the European Union, largely created by Papandreu's anti-Western populism, which alienated allies. His own

USA cautious, Israel shrugs off gesture

# Haider resigns as party leader

Europe ST-5 1/3

ASSOCIATED PRESS

VIENNA, Feb. 29. — In an apparent bid to reduce Austria's international ostracism. Right-wing leader, Mr Joerg Haider, has resigned as head of the Freedom Party, whose participation in government unleashed a storm of international condemnation.

Mr Haider (50), who won notoriety for his past statements supportive of aspects of Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime, made the announcement at a closed-door meeting of his party's national leadership at a downtown hotel yesterday.

Mr Haider remains Governor of Carinthia province and insisted that his decision does not mean he is retiring from national politics.

Although Mr Haider holds no post in the national government, his controversial image and his iron-hand control of the Freedom Party made him the most visible member of the Austrian political establishment, eclipsing his coalition partners, the Centre-Right



Mr Joerg Haider takes his place at Monday's meeting of the Freedom Party. — AP/PTI

Austrian People's Party of Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel.

"I want to avoid our ministers having to face the claim that they must refer every decision to the shadow chancellor in Carinthia," Mr Haider told reporters. "The Freedom Party ministers are not puppets."

Mr Haider will be succeeded as party chief by his trusted lieutenant, Vice-Chancellor Susanne Riess-Passer (39).

Mr Haider's resignation is not expected to lessen his influence on Austria's ruling coalition or bring an immediate end to international diplomatic sanctions imposed when the new government assumed office.

Israel's foreign minister, Mr Davy Levy, said it "does not change anything for us" since the Freedom Party remains in the government. Israel would not return its ambassador, who was withdrawn over three weeks ago, to protest the Freedom Party sharing power, he said today.

While calling the resignation a "step in the right direction", US State Department spokesman, Mr James Rubin said, "Our focus is going to be to what extent the government will live up to the platform it set forth, so we'll watch their behaviour ... And this doesn't change our concerns — the Freedom Party itself is still part of the government."

THE STATESMAN

- 1 MAR 2 000



# Haider resignation fails to pacify EU

Vijay Dutt  
London, March 1

HT-12 2/3 ✓  
TH EUROPEAN Union member countries, including Britain, refused to end the political ostracism of Austria despite the resignation of Joerg Haider from the leadership of his far right Freedom Party.

The EU, the US and Israel, all had frozen political contact with Austria when Haider's party joined the country's coalition last month in February.

The reason being that in the past Joerg Haider used to praise Hitler's immigration and education policies.

A British Government spokesperson said that Haider wishes to be the Chancellor and that his party still remained extremist.

It is clear that Haider will remain intimately involved with the Freedom Party and continue to affect its policies.

His successor is Sussane Riess-Passer, who has been the most devoted and loyal Vice-chairman under Haider.

She has acknowledged that she

would work in close contact with him.

We will continue to work as a team and operate as a political partnership. It would not be very clever of me to do without somebody with his political experience, who knows the party so well and who has been adviser for me in the past.

Significantly, Riess-Passer has been snubbed by the EU at all the meetings she has attended in Brussels, as one of the ministers of the Austrian Cabinet.

Portugal, which is currently the rotating President of the EU, has bluntly said that sanctions will not be lifted.

The PM said the key question is not the personality of Haider. It is the nature of his party.

A few EU member States, and the US have, however, said that the resignation by Haider is a step in the right direction.

But, so far no one has indicated any move to resume normal relations with Austria.

Everyone feels that a master of tactical moves, Haider, has taken a step backward to move forward to head Austria, sooner or later.

# Women emerge winners in a male bastion

By Thomas Abraham

AP-17

**DUBLIN, MARCH 1.** One of the rooms in the Irish President's official residence in Dublin is decorated with portraits of past Presidents of the Emerald Isle. They are mostly of stern, elderly men dressed in dark suits, the very embodiment of the traditional Irish politician. But it is an indication of the changes sweeping Ireland that the more recent portraits of Irish Heads of State are of dynamic, professional women.

Ms. Mary Robinson, the present United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was the first woman to break the male bastion in Irish politics when she was elected President in 1990. She was succeeded by another woman, the current incumbent, Ms. Mary McAleese, creating something of a revolution in what is still one of Europe's more conservative societies.

Ms. McAleese, a former law professor who

## INSIDE IRELAND — II

beat two other women candidates to the post, breaks new ground for another reason as well. She is the first Irish president from Northern Ireland and her election two years ago was regarded as symbolising the efforts to bring peace to the province.

At a meeting with a group of visiting journalists in her residence at Dublin's Phoenix park, it became apparent that despite her charisma and her impressive credentials as a lawyer and an academic, Ms. McAleese would not have been elected President a decade back. As a mother of three, she could not have got a government job a few years back.

Until the Seventies, married women were barred from government service and other institutions like banks, since it was thought that

shortage of labour. "The number of younger women in the work force is now as large as in the Scandinavian countries," said the Irish Deputy Prime Minister, Ms. Mary Harney, who has been an enthusiastic advocate of greater involvement of women in political and economic life. She pointed out that the country joining the European Union had been crucial to the change in social attitudes in what had been a traditional society. "The E.U. membership has opened our minds and perspectives to other ways of doing things," she said.

Born in a working-class Catholic area of Belfast, Ms. McAleese would have, in different times, found it an uphill task to get elected to an office that has traditionally been occupied by retired politicians. In fact, her rival within the ruling Fianna Fail party for Presidential nomination, the former Irish Prime Minister, Mr. Albert Reynolds, would have been a more typical choice for President. But she beat his challenge as well as suspicions about her reported sympathy for Sinn Fein to be elected President with a convincing 59 per cent of the vote.

Despite the emergence of women, politics still remains a male dominated field in Ireland. The Deputy Prime Minister, Ms. Harney, who is also leader of the small Progressive Democratic party, entered politics as a member of the Irish Senate when she was barely out of University. But her early start was unusual. "In the late 1970s when I joined politics the only other women in politics were the wives of former politicians," she said. "Its changing now, but slowly," she added. The rarity of women in politics is not peculiar to Ireland alone. Ms. McAleese pointed to the fact that she was the only elected woman Head of State or government in the West today. "It can be quite lonely, I wish there were more of us," she added.

(Concluded)



**Mary Robinson**

they should be at home, looking after the children. The only professions in which women were allowed were nursing, teaching and to become nuns. The Catholic church exerts considerable influence on Irish society. Abortion is still illegal in Ireland and despite increasing public demands to legalise it, no political party is willing to upset the church by taking up the issue.

The rapid growth of the Irish economy over the last decade has, however, led to changes in the attitude towards working women. The Government is now, in fact, being pressured to encourage more women to go to work to ease the

## HAIDER'S WALTZ

5-6 6 Austria out of line with EU Europe

**J**OERG Haider, charismatic leader of the far-right Freedom Party in Austria, has executed an adroit *pas de deux* by stepping down from his post, but the move may not be enough to end sanctions imposed on Austria by the rest of Europe. Haider has made waves and jangled European nerves with statements that favour Hitler and the Nazis, praising, for example, the Waffen SS — Hitler's shock troops — or the "orderly employment policies" of the Third Reich. Haider does not deny the influence of his parents who had Nazi backgrounds, in his early formation, exemplifying the problem of Austria's Nazi past which has not been acknowledged and probed to the extent that Germany's has been. Haider's party polled a record 27 per cent in national elections emerging as a crucial player in parliament; its participation in the ruling coalition is what the fuss is about. The Freedom Party's current popularity can be attributed not so much to reawakened Nazi connections as to resentment at burgeoning immigration, a fallout of the Balkan wars and the collapse of communism.

Haider's stepping down in response to the storm of protest against him both inside and outside Austria does not mean much, as his place will be taken by Susanne Riese-Passer, a ferociously loyal aide known within the Party as "Queen Cobra". Knowing that his past pronouncements have delivered to him the ex-Nazi and anti-immigrant constituencies, he is now trying to capture the political centre, proclaiming commitment to democracy and human rights. But his political pirouettes and stepping down in favour of his deputy may not cut much ice with the Europeans, who have not yet forgotten the destruction wrought by Nazism; Bosnia was a recent reminder that the ghosts of the past still lurk, and could grow given the right opportunities. Given the rise of neo-Nazi movements in many European countries, it is time Europe took a stand. A canny practitioner of *realpolitik*, Haider will doubtless try and capitalise on Austrian resentment of Europeans telling them what kind of government they should have. The outcome of this crisis will determine whether old-fashioned nationalism still rules the roost, or new-fangled supranationalism of the EU variety is here to stay.

THE STATESMAN

- 6 MAR 2000

# Austrian govt tripping in Haider's shadow

**A** MONTH after taking power Austria's government — isolated internationally, blasted by its Opposition and dogged at every turn by Joerg Haider's latest outrage — is patently still floundering.

Bow-tied conservative Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel, who sparked unprecedented sanctions from Vienna's EU partners by striking a deal with Haider before taking office on February 4, is on the defensive on all fronts. Europe's isolation of Austria remains as firm as ever. Street protests are a daily event. And his economic plans are facing increasingly bitter opposition.

And to cap it all, Haider, fresh from his resignation as Freedom Party chief last week, is more free than ever to lash out on all sides, notably on the European Front.

The EU has made a big mistake in the case of Austria," he said last week, once again threatening Austria's veto on the union's decisions if it continues to coddle shoulder Vienna.

Like most Austrians, Vienna's 14 EU partners rejected as a tactical manoeuvre Haider's resignation. Schuessel, who had thought Haider's move might ease EU pressure — about the only person in Europe who did — has been reduced to repeating tiredly that the threats do not come from a member of his government.

External pressure is one thing. But a month on, ordinary Austrians are continuing to take to the streets to voice their anger over Schuessel's deal with Haider. Up to 15,000 chanted and threw firecrackers outside the prestigious Opera Ball last Thursday night. Schuessel was inside,



**Joerg Haider**

smiling fixedly for the cameras.

In Parliament, meanwhile, his former Social Democrat coalition partners, now in Opposition, have teamed up with the Greens to ensure he has not a day's honeymoon. They are refusing to close ranks behind Schuessel in the face of EU sanctions. Greens chief Alexander Van der

Bellen ridiculed the Chancellor, describing him as like an ostrich with its head in the sand.

The Government is indeed trying simply to ignore the international outcry. Schuessel has pledged to get down to business with economic reforms aimed at balancing the budget and launching a widening privatisation programme. But the belt-tightening measures are unpopular and the determination of the Freedom Party, fundamentally populist, could yet pose problems in supporting their implementation.

Haider, like far-right Labour Minister Elisabeth Sickl, has already called into question the pensions reform set out in the joint government programme, agreed before Schuessel's cabinet was sworn in. Privatisation plans, sketched out in a Bill

adopted last week, face opposition not only from Social Democrats and the unions — who are threatening to strike work over them — but also from some state sector bosses.

Schuessel is also having to deal with criticism from a member of his own party, European Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler, who has been against his power-sharing deal with Haider from the start.

Fischler said last week that if Haider continued his systematic attacks against Europe, the coalition should be dissolved. This is music to the ears of European politicians like Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel, who have already openly expressed a desire to see the Austrian Government collapse.

— Agence France Presse

# Norwegian PM resigns

Oslo, March 10

HTC 19 11/3

Progress Party, is in favour of building the gas power plants now, using available technology. Bondevik's three-party coalition is opposed on environmental grounds.

NORWEGIAN PRIME Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik submitted the resignation of his minority Centrist Government today, after it became clear he would lose a parliamentary showdown with the opposition over a proposal to build gas power plants in the country.

Bondevik said he would go to King Harald today to announce that his three-party coalition no longer has enough political support in the Parliament to remain in power.

The leader of the main opposition the Labour Party, Jens Stoltenberg, was widely expected to be asked by Parliament president Kirsti Kolle Groendahl to form a new government. A new election is not required, according to Norwegian law.

A majority in the Storting, or Parliament, comprising the Labour Party, the Liberals and the right-wing

## Lanka talks unaffected

THE RESIGNATION of the Norwegian Government headed by Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik, is not expected to de-rail the on-going Norwegian bid to facilitate talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE to solve the island's ethnic problem, analysts said.

"It is a set back only to the extent that the new facilitator will have to start from scratch in terms of building up personal rapport with the Sri Lankan Government officials and the LTTE. At any rate, the discussions were at a very early stage and so there is not much distance to be covered," said Dr. Jehan Perera of the National Peace Council.

"The Government's going is not a setback because any Norway would like to help solve the Lankan problem. As Norway is trying to get a seat in the UN Council on the strength of its work as an international peace maker, its participation in Sri Lanka will continue."

HTC, Colombo

agree to the building of the plants against its will.

Stoltenberg is likely to spend several days trying to put together a minority government. But analysts say that he is likely to shift policy only marginally leftwards from Bondevik's coalition. (Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 MAR 2000

HD-16  
14/3

# Aznar gets surprise majority

By Vaiju Naravane

**PARIS, MARCH 13.** Thirteen seems to be the Spanish Prime Minister, Mr. Jose Maria Aznar's lucky number. The crowds that gathered at the Madrid headquarters of his Partido Popular at No 13, Calle Genova on Sunday night were jubilant. The party with 183 seats out of 350 had won an absolute majority in the Spanish Parliament and Mr. Aznar was undoubtedly the hero of the day.

The results, which were announced late on Sunday after the last polling booths were closed, gave Mr. Aznar's Popular Party over 44 per cent of the vote, increasing its seat tally over the 1996 elections from 156 to 183. The Socialist and United Left coalition came in second.

The Socialist Party slumped from 141 to 125 seats while the EU or United Left party was the biggest loser, going from 21 to only eight seats.

Mr. Aznar will no longer need the support of the Catalan nationalist Convergence and Union party. Kingmaker Jordi Pujol, who runs Catalonia like his personal fiefdom, has been emerged significantly weakened as a result. These elections have proved to be a vindication of the liberal reform policies pursued by the Aznar Government.

Spain is one of the fastest growing economies in Europe and the Government with its Latin Liberalism has brought down the unemployment rate from 23 to 15 per cent.

Mr. Aznar, who will no longer require the support of either the CiU or the Basque conservative and nationalist PNV party will now be able to take a tougher stand on Basque terrorism.

With wife, Ms. Ana Botella at his side, Mr. Aznar appeared at an

upper floor window to thank the crowds for their generous support.

In a voice hoarse from campaigning, he said: "Spanish voters have been very generous to us. But we will return that generosity with our work." The Spanish Prime Minister's first speech was carefully conciliatory, calling for collaboration and dialogue as well as respect for those who had voted differently.

The Socialist Party candidate, Mr. Joaquin Almunia immediately conceded defeat and resigned as head of the party. "I congratulate the winning party. I acknowledge their triumph," he said. Despite fears that the Basque separatist organisation ETA would attempt to further disrupt the campaign with terrorist acts, the last few days of the campaign passed off without incident.

A bomb blast in the Basque town of San Sebastian a week ago injured seven persons.

Mr. Javier Arenas, the Popular Party General secretary, said, "We will now be able to complete the process we began four years ago." The extent of the PP's victory caught everyone by surprise. But PP officials now say they were sure they would win hands down. In fact, last week in Madrid, Mr. Alessandro Agad, one of the party's spokesmen told *The Hindu*: "It brings bad luck to mention numbers so I won't say how many. But we are sure of winning a big, big victory. Our priorities will be the creation of another 1.4 million jobs and the fight against terrorism. We would like to resolve the Basque question. Tax reform and other structural reforms are also high on our agenda. We will put an end to conscription by the end of next year and we will take a closer look at pensions and health insurance."

THE HINDU

14 MAR 2000

## Trimble softens stand on disarmament

WASHINGTON, MARCH 18. Mr. David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) leader, said on Friday that he would be willing to re-enter government with Sinn Fein without prior IRA decommissioning.

His words, a further dilution of his "no guns, no government" stance, could strengthen the hand of those planning to challenge his leadership at the UUP annual general meeting next week. At a press conference in Washington, Mr. Trimble said: "I am prepared to look at it again. But I've got to have a very clear answer for people who say 'It didn't work last time, why is it going to work this time?'"

"I have made it clear that we are prepared to be involved in a fresh sequence which will probably not involve arms up front but it has to involve the issue being dealt with, it has to involve the matter working."

However, the Lagan Valley Ulster Unionist M.P., Mr. Jeffrey

Donaldson, who is opposed to the Belfast Agreement, said he believed Mr. Trimble's offer to go back into the executive with Sinn Fein would be rejected. "People would find it difficult to understand why we would set up the institutions again without decommissioning first taking place. I don't think that's a prospect the Ulster Unionist Party would be willing to embrace."

Mr. Jonathan Bell, a vociferous critic of Mr. Trimble and a councillor in his Upper Bann constituency, announced his resignation from the party alleging its leaders were "seeking to engineer the return of Sinn Fein/IRA" to a power-sharing executive.

The U.S. President, Mr. Clinton said in a St. Patrick's Day speech to the annual America Ireland Fund dinner at the White House that he was "burdened by the fact that I have not found an answer to the present stalemate".

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THE HINDU

19 MAR 2000

HD 19/3

# Aznar affirmed

*The massive mandate given to the Popular Party and its leader, Mr. Jose Maria Aznar, by the Spanish electorate is a vindication of the policies he has pursued, writes VAIJU NARAVANE.*

**T**HE MASSIVE mandate given to the Popular Party and its leader, Mr. Jose Maria Aznar, by the Spanish electorate last Sunday is a vindication of the policies he has pursued during the past four years. Mr. Aznar's "Latin liberalism" has led to the creation of some 1.8 million jobs while the economy has grown at a sustained 4 per cent per annum.

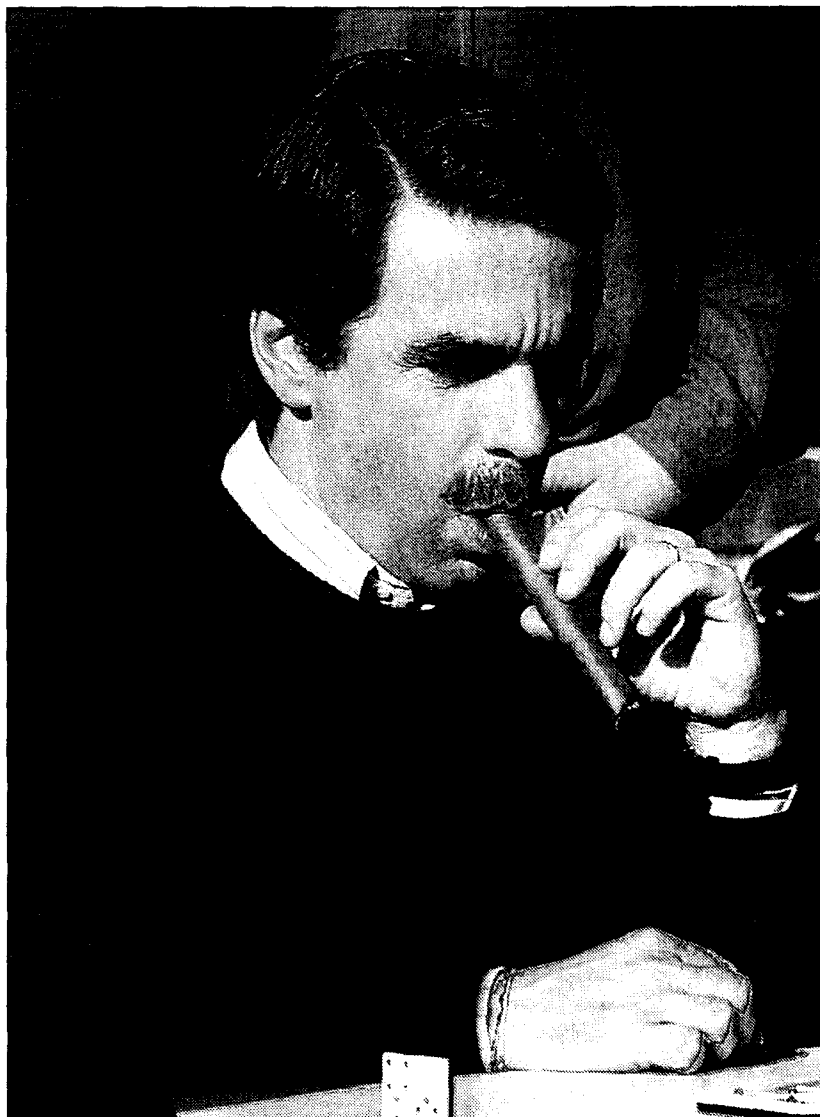
With an absolute majority in Parliament — 183 out of 350 seats — the PP can govern alone and no longer has to rely on the support (with strings attached) of the nationalists, whether Basque or, more importantly, Catalan.

Mr. Aznar has presided over a spectacular transformation in the Spanish economy and has cajoled the unions into opening up the labour market. He has pushed ahead with privatisations begun under the socialist rule of Mr. Felipe Gonzales and slashed unemployment rates from 23 to 15 per cent. Now Mr. Aznar has promised his countrymen "more of the same." That would mean more privatisations, more divestment and negotiated retrenchment in the public sector, and, last but not the least, a continued hard line on the question of Basque terrorism.

"Mr. Aznar is likely to find it easier to deal with the separatist problem as a result of this mandate. But then again, he may not. It will depend on how he decides to handle the situation. And so far Mr. Aznar has indulged in too much hard talk and too little flexibility," says Ms. Carmen Gurruchaga, who writes on Basque affairs for the prestigious Madrid daily *El Pais*. She feels that now is the time for genuine negotiations.

Mr. Aznar has had a stormy relationship with one of his former coalition partners, the conservative Basque PNV, whose demands fall just short of independence. The PNV is the oldest Basque political formation. The ambition of political independence was first formulated by Sabino de Arana Goiri with the founding of the Partido Nacionalista Vasco in 1894. The advent of the Republic in 1930 further fanned the flames of Basque nationalism and saw the emergence of a host of other nationalist groupings.

The terrorist organisation ETA (Euzkadi Ta Askatusuna or the Basque Homeland and Freedom Movement) was born in 1959 and has since waged a relentless terror campaign against the Spanish State. The ETA's political wing, the Herri Batasuna or HB party, and its



**Spain's Prime Minister, Mr. Jose Maria Aznar... In the driver's seat.**

sister organisation known as the EH had called upon their supporters to abstain from the March 12 vote. The result has been a strengthening of the PNV, which is not pressing for total independence but would be happy with a high degree of autonomy.

"Mr. Aznar is going to find it difficult to resolve the Basque question. The PNV leadership might feel miffed at the fact that it has now been cut off from power at the central level and might re-think its attitude towards the more radical nationalist parties. The Prime Minister will have to tread carefully. He cannot afford to become self-confident. It is true that everyone is tired of terrorism and the radical separatists have lost a lot of their support. But the Basques will not be happy to see control going back into the hands of the Castilians again," says Mr. Javier Elzo, sociologist. He does not rule out an alliance of interest between Mr. Jordi Pujol, leader of Catalonia's nationalist Convergencial i Union (CiU) party and the PNV leadership.

Catalonia versus the rest of Spain. This perennial fixture seems to have been wiped off Spain's political calendar. "For the last two legislatures, first

under Felipe Gonzalez and then under Aznar, Jordi Pujol has extracted every advantage he could get for his region. Now Mr. Pujol is going to be in a distinctly uncomfortable position. He took it for granted that the PP would have to form a coalition. Throughout the campaign, he made uncompromising statements, putting a price tag on his support. He angered both the Socialists and the Popular Party. Mr. Aznar will in all likelihood freeze him out," says writer and political commentator Mr. Herman Tertch.

But, he cannot be ruled out easily. "To say that Pujol is finished would be to make a grave mistake. The political landscape is going to be very different in four years' time. Firstly, Aznar, who has been careful and guarded so far is bound to make mistakes. The Socialists are biding their time. They did not expect to win the elections this time and their candidate, Joaquin Almunia, was a sacrificial lamb. The Socialists have their eye on the elections of 2004, for which they will begin grooming Javier Solana. In the meantime, the PNV, the Socialists and the CiU will make a formidable opposition alliance. The fun is only just beginning," says Mr. Elzo.



# IRA resumes punishment attacks

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CHRISTOPHER WALKER  
THE TIMES, LONDON

BELFAST, March 18. — The Irish Republican Army has started meting out savage punishment attacks again, with seven shootings, attempted shootings or beatings in different areas of Northern Ireland within the past week.

The resumption of such attacks after a gap of six months is claimed by Republican and security sources to be the result of deep cracks now appearing in IRA solidarity.

Among the victims was a 16-year-old Roman Catholic boy in the staunchly Republican Ardoyne district of North Belfast who was taken to hospital after being attacked in daylight by at least three IRA men wielding iron bars. The new spate of violence began in the same area on 10 March when a 30-year-old man was shot in both legs in the car park of a pub called The Jamaica Inn. One source familiar with the attack said that an artery was severed and that the victim was still seriously ill in hospital.

Another Catholic victim of the IRA punishment squads was Mark Kelly (24), who was kidnapped from near his girlfriend's home and later dumped in South Armagh, near the Irish border, with bullet wounds to the ankles, hands and an elbow. His only "crime", according to a source, was his relationship with the daughter of a senior Sinn Fein official. A day after Mr Kelly's kidnapping, a 20-year-old man was shot in the leg in the nationalist town of Strabane in Co Tyrone, the location of the last IRA punishment shooting in October before the leadership ordered a halt.

On 13 March there were three IRA attacks. In the Republican Creggan district of Londonderry a man was dragged from his car at gunpoint and beaten mercilessly with pick axe handles.

On the same day, in the nationalist Ballymurphy district of Belfast, an 18-year old Catholic told relatives that as he lay beaten on the ground ready to be shot by an IRA squad, the 9 mm pistol aimed at him jammed. Another member of the squad showed the would-be gunman how to clear the barrel, but as he then tried to shoot the victim in the hip the pistol jammed again and the gang made off. Also on 13 March, a 20-year-old man was shot in the ankle on the Republican area of Poleglass in West Belfast.

A Catholic community worker in West Belfast said: "To all extents and purposes the IRA is now back on the beat. You can expect a spate of knee-cappings during the next few weeks."

Security sources noted that, in the past, one of the traditional ways of assuaging hardline military elements within the IRA has been to allow them to increase punishment attacks and threats. There has recently been mounting grassroots disagreement with the continuing ceasefire.

THE STATESMAN

19 MAR 2000

# No sign of IRA disarming: report

By Thomas Abraham

HD-17

LONDON, FEB. 1. The Canadian General John De Chastelain, chairing an international commission set up to oversee the disarmament of paramilitary weapons in Northern Ireland, delivered his report to the British and Irish Governments shortly after yesterday's midnight deadline.

The report is believed to show little or no progress by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) on disarming its weapons. This does not bode well for the province's two month-old power-sharing Government. The British Minister for Northern Ireland, Mr. Peter Mandelson and the Irish Foreign Minister, Mr. Brian Cowen, are scheduled to meet in Dublin today to discuss the report. The First Minister and leader of the Protestant Ulster Unionist party, Mr. David Trimble, had warned earlier that he would resign his post if the IRA did not begin disarming by January 31. The Ulster Unionists had, in fact, voted to allow Mr. Trimble to participate in a government with Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, on this condition.

The IRA has nominated two representatives to the decommissioning commission. But Gen. De Chastelain's interim report is believed to have submitted that no weapon has been handed over or destroyed so far, nor has a timetable been agreed upon. The Northern Ireland peace agreement gives the various paramilitary groups until the end of May to decommission. But the Ulster Unionists had asked for a commitment that the IRA will disarm and set a February deadline for the paramilitary group to begin handing over weapons. If Mr. Trimble decides to go through with his resignation threat, the carefully balanced formula to share power between Northern Ireland's Protestant majority and the Catholic minority will come to nought.

The row over when the IRA will decommission has stymied the implementation of the peace accord. The Good Friday agreement, which was signed a year and a half ago, specifies that all paramilitary organisations should lay down their weapons by the end of May 2000. But the IRA and the Protestant paramilitary organisations are not signatories to this agreement endorsed by the major political parties. The closest the IRA has come to saying that it will disarm came in a public statement last November, when it mentioned that "full implementation" of the peace agreement will lead to a lasting peace. Full implementation includes the laying down of weapons. The IRA has given similar indirect assurances to the British and Irish Governments and the Ulster Unionists that it supported the peace agreement and the disarmament provision.

Irish commentators report that there is opposition within the IRA to decommissioning so soon. Mr. Gerry Adams and Mr. Martin McGuinness, the two Sinn Fein leaders, have been instrumental in bringing the IRA around to the idea of ending its armed struggle but clearly there is still reluctance within the organisation's rank and file on early disarmament.

THE HINDU  
- 2 FEB 2000

# Europe threatens to isolate Austria HD-17

2/2  
By Batuk Gathani

**BRUSSELS, FEB. 1.** Fourteen member countries of the European Union have unanimously warned the 15th member, Austria, of risking isolation if the far right Freedom Party led by the maverick Mr. Joerg Haider was made part of the proposed new coalition Government in that country. The countries also threatened to cut off bilateral meetings with Austrian Ministers.

Mr. Haider, the *enfant terrible* of the European politics, is also a populist with xenophobic and anti-European ideas. The Freedom Party advocates sending out foreigners from Austria and proposes to ruthlessly clamp down on workers from Turkey and the Balkan countries.

Despite much liberal and human rights rhetoric, the anti-migrant sentiment in the E.U. in general and Austria in particular, is high owing to the high unemployment rate. Current estimates of the jobless indicate that nearly 11 per cent of the E.U. workforce remain unemployed and are living off social security hand-outs from the generous welfare system.

Mr. Haider has dexterously manipulated popular feeling against the two established political parties in Austria which have ruled the country for decades. Till the

Austrian politicians are in a quandary and are engaged in desperate negotiations to find a way to keep Mr. Haider and his party out of Government. The current arithmetic in the Austrian Parliament makes such prospects remote and the alternative is for the

President to order fresh elections. But, the latest opinion polls suggest that the Freedom Party would be returned with an even larger number of seats.

The move by the two rightist organisations, the Freedom Party and People's Party, to form a coalition government has triggered much consternation in major E.U. capitals.

Mr. Haider says he is not a racist or anti-European and that he is being misunderstood but such protestations lack credibility. Mr. Haider's admirers say that the man is a strict disciplinarian committed to a sound programme of economic reforms based on budget rigour and long overdue reform of Austria's inefficient pension and welfare system. On the broad economic front, the Freedom Party has a commonality of purpose with the People's Party. The Social Democrats have not only lost the negotiating edge but have been rated as unpopular because of their poor performance record.

A more pragmatic perception in the E.U. capitals is that isolating Austria may boost Mr. Haider's popularity. It remains to be seen how the crisis can be resolved as E.U. Governments have vowed to cold shoulder any Austrian Government that includes the Freedom Party.

Mr. Schuessel, leader of the People's Party, said: "Austria does not need a lesson in democracy. We are not a developing country as far as human rights are concerned" adding a Government with or without the Freedom Party may be formed soon.

# Far-Right close to sharing power with Conservatives in Vienna

Israel to recall envoy • Belgium says EU could do without Austria

Vienna, February 3

**A**USTRIAN far-rightist Joerg Haider and Conservative leader Wolfgang Schuessel met President Thomas Klestil today to seek his approval for a new Centre-Right coalition despite intense international opposition. The two men arrived separately at the Hofburg Palace just before 4 pm (IST) for talks with the head of state on a government programme which they presented to him yesterday and to agree on a cabinet list.

(But as the day wore on, reports DPA, President Klestil dropped a political bombshell, saying he was using his prerogative to delay the takeover of power by the new coalition. He said he wanted to first study the 100-page document drawn up by the two parties setting out their joint policies. He would then decide his next step, his aides said.)

People's Party leader Schuessel, foreign minister in the outgoing grand coalition since 1995, will be Chancellor if Mr Klestil gives his approval. Mr Haider, best known for remarks belittling the crimes of the Nazis, will not join the cabinet. A small group of protesters threw eggs and fruit at Mr Haider as he walked from his car, but nothing hit him.

The new government programme will carry a preamble committing the coalition to the basic



Joerg Haider, left, shaking hands with Wolfgang Schuessel. Photo: AFP

principles of European democracy. Israel said it would withdraw its ambassador and a leading international rating agency said Austria's AAA credit rating could be downgraded, which would raise the country's borrowing costs. Standard And Poor's warned that the row might delay fiscal and structural reforms.

Austria's European partners, appalled at the prospect of Mr Haider's Freedom Party entering the national government, kept up the pressure. Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel questioned whether it was really essential that

Austria should remain in the EU.

"It's too simplistic to say that we must keep Austria in Europe at all costs. I think Europe can very well do without Austria. We don't need it," Mr Michel said on Belgian radio.

Mr Klestil, a 67-year-old former diplomat who was re-elected for a second six-year term in 1998, faced the most difficult decision of his career. He made clear his aversion to the new government in an unprecedented interview yesterday in which he lashed out at both Mr Schuessel and Mr Haider, but said he had little choice as they command 104 seats in the 183-seat Parliament.

Mr Klestil cannot call a new election unless Parliament first votes to dissolve itself.

"If I were to swear in this government, I would not do it out of personal conviction, because I fear that Austria would suffer internationally," Mr Klestil told a news magazine. "In a democracy, a parliamentary majority has to be respected. Personal preferences do not count."

Mr Schuessel has been trying to persuade Austria's partners that he can "tame" Mr Haider. "There is no doubt that Austria will prove that it will continue to be a reliable and stable partner in the European union," he said. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Washington would watch Austria very closely "and will take appropriate steps". (AFP)

# Schuessel-Haider bid to form Govt.

VIENNA, FEB. 3. The Austrian far-rightist, Mr. Joerg Haider, and the Conservative leader, Mr. Wolfgang Schuessel, met the President, Mr. Thomas Klestil, today to seek his approval for a new centre-right coalition despite intense international opposition.

The two men arrived separately at the Hofburg Palace for talks with the head of state on a government programme which they presented to him yesterday and to agree to a Cabinet list.

The People's Party leader, Mr. Schuessel, Foreign Minister in the outgoing grand coalition since 1995, will be the Chancellor if Mr. Klestil gives his approval.

A small group of protesters threw eggs and fruit at Mr. Haider as he walked from his car but nothing hit him. Austria's European partners, appalled at the prospect of Mr. Haider's Freedom Party entering national government, kept up the pressure.

Mr. Klestil (67), former diplomat who was re-elected for a second six-year term in 1998, faced the most difficult decision of his career. He made clear his aver-



**Mr. Wolfgang Schuessel (left), head of the Austrian People's Party, shakes hands with the right-wing Freedom Party leader, Mr. Joerg Haider, watched by the Austrian President, Mr. Thomas Klestil. The pair signed a statement at Vienna's Hofburg Palace on Thursday affirming support for democracy and acknowledging Austrian involvement in Nazi atrocities. — AP**

sion to the new government in an unprecedented interview yesterday in which he lashed out at both Mr. Schuessel and Mr. Haider, but said he had little choice as they

command 104 seats in the 183-seat Parliament. Mr. Klestil cannot call a new election unless Parliament first votes to dissolve itself. "If I were to swear in this

government, I would not do it out of personal conviction, because I fear that Austria would suffer internationally," Mr. Klestil said.

Mr. Schuessel has been trying to persuade Austria's partners that he can 'tame' Mr. Haider. "There is no doubt that Austria will prove that it will continue to be a reliable and stable partner in the European Union," he told the Orf radio. But the world remained unconvinced. Israel said it would withdraw its Ambassador and a leading international rating agency said Austria's AAA credit rating could be downgraded, which would raise the country's borrowing costs. The U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, said Washington would watch Austria very closely "and will take appropriate steps".

The Austrian radio today said that Mr. Schuessel's State Secretary, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, would be Foreign Minister in the new government. Mr. Haider, who will remain provincial governor in Carinthia, has said his party will control the Finance Ministry. — Reuters

# EU, US sanctions likely against Austria

**Vienna, Feb. 3:** Austria's place on the world stage was to be decided on Thursday when President Thomas Klestil declares whether a coalition government including a radical far-right party would be appointed.

Austria's 14 EU partners, the United States and Israel have threatened to politically isolate Vienna if Mr Klestil formally announces an administration involving the Freedom Party, an anti-immigration grouping led by Joerg Haider, a controversial figure known for past comments glossing over — or even admiring — the Nazi regime.

Earlier in the day conservative leader Wolfgang Schuessel and far-rightist Joerg Haider signed the coalition pact, but the President has yet to authorise them to form a government.

A spokesman for President Thomas Klestil

told Reuters. "The President will study the government programme and the list of ministers which he has received and will decide on further steps at the appropriate time."

Mr Schuessel, foreign minister in the outgoing grand coalition government, said he expected Mr Klestil to give him a mandate to form the next government on Thursday afternoon. In Austria itself, public indignation over Mr Haider's rising influence spilled over late on Wednesday into a protest by 15,000 people in front of the offices of Mr Klestil and the Freedom Party's would-be coalition partner, the mainstream conservative People's Party. "This nightmare must end right away," said an organiser, Max Koch, as protesters booed and whistled.

Mr Haider, a charismatic politician who helped his party come second in elections

last October, has done his best to assuage the critics, short of renouncing the deal struck on Tuesday with the People's Party aimed at ending a four-month power vacuum.

He has apologised for his remarks in previous years downplaying the function of Nazi concentration camps and praising the Third Reich's employment policy, and has insisted that foreigners would have nothing to fear under his government. He has also said that he would take no part in a coalition government, and conceded that changes requested by Mr Klestil to a 100-page joint program agreed by the two parties were "possible." Other countries should wait and judge his party by its performance in office, he said, not by "prejudices." Mr Klestil himself has repeatedly expressed his strong wish to keep the Freedom Party out of power — in an

interview to be published on Thursday, the president slams Freedom Party leaders as being not fit for power — but admitted that, in the end, democracy must be respected.

According to the APA news agency, a list of ministers and portfolios to be presented to Mr Klestil on Thursday by Mr Haider and People's Party chief and current foreign minister Wolfgang Schuessel gives many of the key posts to the far-right party.

Mr Haider's party would reportedly have the defence, infrastructure and social affairs ministries, while the conservatives would take the office of Chancellor and the foreign, interior, economy, agriculture and education ministries. The agreement for the coalition was struck in defiance of Austria's EU partners, which had said that they would each

suspend political contacts. (AFP, Reuters)

# IRA given another week

By Thomas Abraham *WHO* *HO-1A*

**LONDON, FEB. 4.** The British Government has given the Irish Republican Army (IRA) another week to make a start on the decommissioning of their weapons. But at the same time, it set in motion legislation to suspend Northern Ireland's fledgling power-sharing executive.

After a day of frantic negotiations to avert a return to direct rule, the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mr. Peter Mandelson, told Parliament that there had not yet been any decommissioning by any of the major paramilitary groups. He said the emergency legislation to suspend the Northern Ireland Assembly and executive would be published on Friday but passed only next week, if the present "unsatisfactory state of affairs" did not change.

Mr. Mandelson said the IRA's refusal to make more progress on decommissioning was "totally unacceptable" but added that it was still possible to rescue the situation. "Even at this late stage I believe it remains possible to rebuild confidence... and to ensure that decommissioning starts," he said.

Mr. Mandelson's statement on Thursday came ahead of a late night mini-summit between the British and Irish Prime Ministers, who reiterated the message that not enough progress had been made by the IRA towards disarmament. Mr. Mandelson told Parliament that the coming week would see more intense negotiations to break the deadlock. "We shall redouble our efforts with the Irish Government and the main parties to resolve the present difficulties," he said.

Mr. Mandelson, while acknowledging the failure to achieve decommissioning, said the report from Gen. John de Chastelain, head of the international commission on decommissioning, confirmed that all the main paramilitary groups were holding to their ceasefires. "The ceasefires remain in place. The silence of the guns and the unequivocal support of the IRA and other paramilitary groups played a vital part in



**Children from across the religious divide place candles at the entrance to Parliament building, Stormont, in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on Thursday. The children came from various parts of Northern Ireland to hold a peace vigil in support of the peace process which is in deep crisis. — AP**

recent political advances," he said. He also welcomed a recent IRA statement that it supported the peace process. But he added, "...in the case of the IRA it has to be clear that decommissioning has to happen." He appealed to the paramilitary organisations to "heed the call of the people and and to get cracking and to enable self-government in Northern Ireland to flourish once and for all."

Sinn Fein reacted angrily to the

prospect of a suspension of the Assembly and re-imposition of direct rule from London. Mr. Gerry Kelly, a senior Sinn Fein member, said a suspension would be "the worst possible scenario."

He pointed out that "for five years we have had the silence of the guns" and said the Protestant Ulster Unionists, in demanding the suspension of the Assembly were trying to "cut their nose to spite their face."

# E.U. slaps sanctions on Vienna

*110-4 Europe*  
**VIENNA, FEB. 4.** Fourteen member countries of the European Union will impose a freeze on bilateral political relations with Austria from Friday in protest against the inclusion of the right wing Freedom Party in the new coalition Government that assumed power in Vienna on Thursday.

*5/2*  
The Prime Minister of Portugal, Mr. Antonio Guterres, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the E.U., said in Lisbon today that Austria's E.U. partners had no option but to carry out their threat to impose sanctions. "As from tomorrow, the measures agreed by the 14 countries will take effect," Mr. Guterres said. "As long as this situation remains, we shall maintain this stance." The E.U. members had agreed on Monday to freeze bilateral ties, limit diplomatic contacts to a "technical level" and not back any Austrian candidacy for international organisations if the Freedom Party entered Government. The German Government



**Protesters against the new coalition Government in Austria try to get through barriers set up by police in front of the Presidential Palace in Vienna on Thursday. — AP**

said it would freeze bilateral relations with Austria. The deputy Government spokesperson, Ms Charima Reinhardt, said Germany would apply the decisions of

the E.U. in this respect. The new coalition Government in Austria was sworn in by the President, Mr. Thomas Klestil, in Vienna during the day. In a brief ceremo-

ny, members of the new Cabinet — five from Mr. Joerg Haider's Freedom Party and five from the conservative People's Party — swore oaths of office.

Heading the new Government as Chancellor is Mr. Wolfgang Schuessel, head of the People's Party.

The Freedom Party member, Ms Suzanne Riess-Passer is Vice-Chancellor and the Ministries of Finance, Social Affairs, Defence, Infrastructure and Justice are also held by Mr. Haider's Freedom Party.

Thousands of people demonstrated against the new Government outside the presidential palace. Some of the protestors clashed with the police.

Even before the swearing-in, Israel withdrew its ambassador, making good its threat to suspend relations if new Government included the Freedom Party. Israel has also banned Mr. Haider from visiting the country. — AP, AFP, Reuters



# President had asked Europe to block Haider's path

MARTIN FLETCHER  
THE TIMES, LONDON

LONDON, Feb. 4. — As Austria's President prepared reluctantly to approve the inclusion of Mr Joerg Haider's Far-Right Freedom Party in a new coalition government, it emerged yesterday that he had personally lobbied Mr Tony Blair and other European leaders to try to keep Mr Haider out of power.

At the start of the week, Mr Klestil telephoned heads of government to say their intervention was the only way to prevent the Freedom Party's inclusion

in a coalition government. On Monday evening, Portugal, which holds EU's rotating presidency, rushed out a statement on behalf of all 14 member states threatening Austria with political isolation if the FP was included.

Some governments had serious reservations about such a blatant intervention in the internal affairs of another country and feared the statement might actually boost Mr Haider, but they felt unable to reject such an urgent appeal from Austria's own President. British ministers have been conspicuously silent on the issue ever since.

The European Parliament yesterday

condemned the expected inclusion of Mr Haider, saying it "would legitimise the extreme Right in Europe", and demanded the EU be ready to suspend Austria's membership if it breaches the group's founding principles of democracy, liberty and respect for human rights.

France postponed a visit to Austria by senior defence officials. The European Commission announced, somewhat pointedly, that Mr Romano Prodi, its President, would visit the European Monitoring Centre of Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna.

Mr Louis Michel, Belgium's foreign minister, said that EU should, if neces-

sary, expel Austria.

Yet the almost universal condemnation masks the deep faultlines that his rise to power has reopened within the EU. The drive to threaten Austria with sanctions was under way before Mr Klestil issued his appeals. Its most enthusiastic proponents were countries such as Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Italy and Portugal, which have had their own problems with Right-wing extremism. Those same countries are also enthusiastic integrationists.

They place less weight on national sovereignty and see the EU as much more than a trading block.

## Threat of Belfast Cabinet losing powers increases

# IRA rejects disarm terms

*Belfast 7-5 6/2*  
**Belfast, Feb. 5 (AP):** The Irish Republican Army, sounding defiant at a critical moment for Northern Ireland's peace process, warned today it would not start to disarm in response to Protestant or British government demands.

While insisting that the arguments over when, if ever, the IRA should disarm "can be resolved", it stressed: "This will not be on British or unionist terms nor will it be advanced by British legislative threats".

That would appear to rule out even a token act of disarmament before Friday, when the British government has pledged to withdraw powers from the 12-member Cabinet in Belfast.

In a statement to Ireland's state broadcasters RTE, the out-

lawed IRA emphasised its willingness to "support efforts to secure the resolution of the arms issue".

But the statement did not directly say whether the IRA would begin scrapping its weapons dumps in cooperation with a disarmament commission, as the Good Friday peace accord of 1998 envisaged.

The British government has planned to withdraw powers from Northern Ireland's 8-week-old power-sharing administration — which includes the IRA-linked Sinn Fein party — unless the IRA makes clear it will disarm.

The major Protestant party, the Ulster Unionists, has vowed to resign from the Cabinet, forcing its collapse, unless powers are withdrawn in protest at the IRA's

refusal. In its statement the IRA sternly disputed others' expectations that its members should have begun identifying its hidden arms dumps by now.

"The IRA has never entered into any agreement, undertaking or understanding at any time with any one on any aspect of decommissioning. We have not broken our commitment or betrayed anyone," the statement said.

The British and Irish governments have been pressing Sinn Fein leaders in public — and IRA figures in private — to clearly state its intention to disarm.

Today's statement fell short of that demand, seeking to sound positive while offering no concrete assurances, much like its previous statement on Tuesday.

Both stressed the value of the group's 1997 ceasefire.

"Those who have once again made the political process conditional on the decommissioning of silent IRA arms are responsible for creating the current difficulties and keeping the political process in a state of perpetual crisis," said the statement, which concluded: "The peace process is under no threat from the IRA."

Earlier, *The Guardian* reported today that Britain's secretary to Northern Ireland Peter Mandelson had launched a dramatic attempt to rescue the peace process yesterday, by reassuring the IRA that it would not have to disarm by next week to prevent the re-imposition of direct rule.

THE TELEGRAPH

- 6 FEB 2000

AUSTRIA / 50 HURT IN FRESH PROTESTS

## Haider shrugs off E.U. action

VIENNA, FEB. 5. The Austrian far right leader, Mr. Joerg Haider, shrugged off the international uproar against the inclusion of his Freedom Party in Government as street riots in Vienna left more than 50 people injured today.

Mr. Haider dismissed steps taken by Austria's 14 European Union partners to isolate the country politically, noting that major E.U. policy required unanimity among the bloc's 15 members. "This is nothing to get hysterical about," he said, adding Austrians need not worry about sanctions.

Condemnation abroad and violent protests at home greeted the centre-right Government of the Conservative Chancellor, Mr. Wolfgang Schuessel, sworn in yesterday in Vienna by the President, Mr. Thomas Klestil. Police sources said 43 police officers, 11 anti-rightist demonstrators and two bystanders were injured and 32 police vehicles damaged in the riots, which peaked with clashes in an elegant shopping district near the central city landmark of St. Stephen's Cathedral. Seven arrests were made.

Late yesterday and early today, police used water cannon and tear gas to disperse a hard core of about 200 masked persons who threw stones and other missiles at them. An Austrian human rights group, Sos Mitmenschen, cancelled a demonstration against Mr. Haider today because of the violence, but police said they expected militant protesters to mass before the imperial Hofburg Palace again.

Mr. Haider called on the Opposition Social Democrats and Greens to "rein in their support-



Members of the newly sworn-in Austrian Cabinet pose for a group photo on Friday at the Chancellery in Vienna before their first ministerial meeting. (Front row third from left) the Chancellor, Mr. Wolfgang Schuessel. On his left is the Vice-Chancellor, Ms. Susanne Riess-Passer. — AP

ers who obviously have gone out of control". "Yes to the freedom of opinion and the right to demonstrate," he said. "No to violence."

Police said several foreign youths were among the protesters in the riots, which were unusually violent by Austrian standards.

Meanwhile, reacting to the developments, the new Chancellor, Mr. Schuessel said Austria had not become an international out-

cast, and a new Hitler was not on the rise with the inclusion of the Freedom Party in his coalition. The People's Party leader said he had not imagined that joining a coalition with the Freedom Party would lead to such an outcry.

"Austria is not triggering a crisis in Europe. Do 360 million people in 14 big and powerful states really have to fear tiny Austria with eight million people? It is ridiculous?" Mr. Schuessel asked.

Austria's E.U. partners mistrust Mr. Haider for comments he has made playing down Nazi crimes, expressing hostility to immigration and opposition to the bloc's enlargement.

### U.S. summons envoy

The United States has ordered its ambassador to Austria to return home for consultations, the Secretary of State, Ms Madeleine Albright, said. — Reuters, AFP

# Back to square one



**FACING OFF AGAIN:** The Ulster Unionists lead by Mr. David Trimble (second from left) and the Sinn Fein headed by Mr. Gerry Adams and Mr. Martin McGuinness.

*Just two months after Northern Ireland's Protestants and Catholics sat together for the first time in a Government, it has been placed under suspension. THOMAS ABRAHAM traces the events.*

**J**UST TWO months ago, with much fanfare Northern Ireland's protestants and catholics sat together for the first time in a power-sharing Government. That Government was intended to mark the end of a bitter period in Irish history and to open the way to a new Northern Ireland in which the protestant majority and the catholic minority would live together in equality and dignity. But so deep-rooted are the suspicions and animosities that have fuelled this decades-long conflict, that the Government has already ground to a halt and been placed under suspension by the British Government.

The cause for this latest crisis is not new — it has plagued the peace process from the time it began more than five years ago. The central issue which has troubled the protestant parties in Northern Ireland has been whether the Irish Republican Army will end its armed struggle to reunify Northern Ireland and lay down its weapons. The main protestant party, the Ulster Unionists, only agreed after a protracted internal debate last year to sit in a government with Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, if the IRA took the first steps towards decommissioning its weapons by February. This has not happened and so the Ulster Unionist leader, Mr. David Trimble, was preparing to resign and take his party out of Government.

Sinn Fein has pointed out that the peace agreement only specifies a deadline of March 22 for weapons to be handed over and has said that there was no need for the Ulster Unionists to set an arbitrary deadline of February 1. Legally, Sinn Fein and the IRA are right: there is no requirement to decommission before March. But the spirit of the peace agreement would appear to require the IRA to make at least a token gesture towards disarmament and calm

fears among protestants who are sceptical about its intentions.

Part of the problem over arms decommissioning flows from the ambiguity of the Northern Ireland peace agreement. Neither the IRA nor any of the other paramilitary organisations were signatories to the agreement, nor were they directly involved in the negotiations. The IRA and similar groups were represented by political parties close to them. It was these parties which signed the agreement and pledged to use whatever influence they had on the armed groups to disarm. There is thus no legal obligation on the IRA or any of the other armed groups to lay down their weapons. The IRA for its part has never explicitly stated that it was going to lay down arms. But through its actions, it has indicated that it supports the peace agreement. It has maintained a ceasefire for five years, and recently it sent two senior figures to liaise with a body that is to decide the timetable and modality for disarmament. But these gestures alone have not been enough to calm the suspicions of the Unionists, who have insisted on a verifiable start to disarmament.

The two Sinn Fein leaders, Mr. Gerry Adams and Mr. Martin McGuinness, both former IRA commanders and influential members of the republican movement, have been instrumental in persuading the IRA to put aside its armed struggle, and use democratic methods instead to achieve its political aim of reunifying Ireland. The IRA has backed this line, but there are undoubtedly elements within the movement who are unhappy at surrendering their weapons. Hence the reluctance to start disarmament. Many in the IRA argue that they have effectively laid down their weapons by maintaining a ceasefire and do not see the need for any further action

immediately. The IRA, and the republican movement in general, would argue that they want to see how the peace agreement is implemented before taking any precipitate steps towards disarmament. For Northern Ireland's catholics, the most important part of the agreement are the provisions guaranteeing them equality with the protestant majority. The IRA and Sinn Fein appear to feel that it is important to ensure that a more equal society is created before giving up their weapons. A deeper, though unstated, reason for the IRA's reluctance to hand over its weapons is that once it disarms it no longer has a reason for existence. An armed organisation cannot exist without weapons. Once the IRA disarms, it will in effect have to disband and end its 80-year-long existence. This is a difficult step for any organisation to take.

The impasse over weapons handover is a reflection of the suspicions that persist in Northern Ireland despite the peace agreement. The Ulster Unionists and other protestants are convinced that the IRA will never give up its weapons, while the IRA and Sinn Fein see the insistence on disarmament as an excuse by the protestants not to share power with them.

It is not clear what strategy the British and the Irish Governments intend to adopt to get over this impasse. The suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly suits the Ulster Unionists but has caused dismay in Sinn Fein, who argue rightly that they have scrupulously followed their obligations under the peace agreement and see no reason for the suspension. Sinn Fein has argued that this suspension will make it more difficult than ever to get the IRA to lay down arms. "In my view the whole issue of arms can be satisfactorily resolved and I am committed to resolving it. But proving that politics does not work is not the way to persuade armed groups," Mr. Adams wrote recently. The general consensus appears to be that the IRA must in some way be persuaded at least to agree on a timetable for disarmament before any further progress is made. But whether this is possible, and if so how it is to be achieved, no one seems to know.

## A CHALLENGE IN EUROPE *Europe*

THERE MAY BE lessons for this country from the manner in which Europe is tackling a marked resurgence of fascism. In a surprisingly strong reaction to the emergence of a self-proclaimed neo-Nazi rightist group as partner in a ruling alliance in Austria, the European Union has slapped sanctions on the member-country, and threatened political and economic isolation. It is the first major challenge to the very relevance of the European Union beyond the irritant of Mr. Slobodan Milosevic and his ethnic cleansing. After going to war and pressing into service the awesome fire power of the Atlantic alliance in Kosovo, this was a logical step, even though the stridency of the comments of the E.U. leaders must take one by surprise. The anti-immigrant, pro-Nazi Freedom Party of Mr. Jorg Haider "is inspired by an ideology opposed to the humanistic values and respect for human dignity on which the European Union was founded," said the French President, Mr. Jacques Chirac, ahead of the talks that led to the party entering the government in Vienna. "This is about Europe and its value," commented a spokesman for Mr. Gerhard Shroeder, Chancellor of Germany, which has also witnessed a disturbing rise of neo-Nazism. The reaction in other European capitals was equally blunt and revealed a determination to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

Adolf Hitler's ghost after all still stalks the continent after he inflicted the heaviest damage in human history more than half a century ago. The Freedom Party's entry into the Austrian government ending 30 years of rule by Social Democrats came ironically during a week that saw the commemoration in Stockholm of the liberation of the notorious Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, Poland, by the Soviet Red Army in 1945, signalling the closure of the darkest chap-

ter of European history. During commemorations five years ago to mark 50 years of the end of Hitler's war, one speaker recalled that remembrance was not just an act of piety but a commitment to alertness against relapse into barbarity. Europe's present leaders gathered under the banner of the E.U. may just be displaying that alertness. The contrast needs to be repeatedly stressed if history is not to be repeated: the reaction is a stark contrast to the "peace in our time" capitulation to Hitler by Britain's Neville Chamberlain, who proclaimed his pacifism and hailed the agreement he had reached with Germany to prevent war. Two months after that Munich accord, Hitler's hooligans torched Jewish synagogues and deported 30,000 Jews to concentration camps. Exactly a year later, in September 1939, German troops marched into Poland and launched that terrible conflagration.

As it takes the suspected fascist threat head on, rejecting suggestions that it give the Austrian coalition time to make course corrections where needed, the European Union is entering uncharted territory. The treaties which established the union state that it was being founded on liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, any member-nation transgressing these being liable to suspension. The fundamental objective was to prevent another war. The blunt interference in the internal affairs of a member-nation is a radical departure, which can pose an existentialist threat to the union. By deciding that there is a far greater danger in allowing fascist tendencies to go unchallenged, the leaders are displaying a hearty commitment to a Europe free of the ethnic hatred and prejudice that turned the last century into the bloodiest in its history.

THE HINDU

- 7 FEB 2000

## Anti-Haider protests in Vienna continue

Vienna, February 6

HT-12 712  
AUSTRIAN RIOT police stopped hundreds of demonstrators from marching on the headquarters of the far-right Freedom Party overnight, after sometimes violent protests against the party's inclusion in a new coalition government.

Police barred hundreds of protesters from the pedestrian road leading to the party building in the centre of town after minor scuffles. Police armoured cars and water canons were on stand-by.

Yesterday, the second day of protests, a group of marchers hurled eggs and bottles at police protecting the Vienna headquar-

ters of Austria's Conservative People's Party, coalition partners of the Freedom Party. Their brief attack contrasted with the attitude of the main body of some 2,000 protesters, who gathered peacefully in the city to show their disapproval of Austria's new conservative and far-right government.

In the violence during the protests on Friday, 43 police officers and 13 protesters were hurt. Most of the protesters were young left-wingers as well as shouting slogans condemning Joerg Haider's Freedom Party, which won government posts for the first time on Friday, the crowds attacked privatisation and demanded "jobs for all."

LISBON: The European Union will maintain all its sanctions against the new government in Vienna despite pleas from the Austrian President, Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres has said. "I informed him of the measures that the 14 members (EU partners of Austria) are going to apply," said Guterres, whose country currently holds the EU's rotating presidency.

EU leaders agreed to sever all official bilateral contacts, withdraw support for Austrian candidates to posts in international bodies, and receive ambassadors only at a technical level should the Austrian far-right enter government.

(AFP)

## ✓ Austria Uber Alles ✓

The swearing-in of a new conservative-far right coalition government in Austria has predictably set a cat of a different colour among the pigeons of the western democratic world. The reactions, particularly of Israel, the European Union and the United States, were only to be expected. They had warned of a hard line, including sanctions, if the Freedom Party of Mr Joerg Haider, which emerged as the second largest in the October elections, joined the government. In their view, Mr Haider is politically untouchable because of his praise for Hitler's "orderly employment policies" and description of Nazi concentration camps as "punishment camps". After his party's unexpected showing in the elections, Mr Haider has apologised for his offensive remarks and committed himself to a programme of reform. But there are no takers among those leading the campaign against him, with Israel in the forefront. Tel Aviv, which had threatened to sever diplomatic ties if Mr Haider's party joined the government, has confirmed that its ambassador will be withdrawn. The US has not recalled its envoy but summoned him to Washington for "consultations". The EU has imposed sanctions, which means its 14 members will freeze bilateral ties, limit diplomatic contacts to a "technical level" and oppose the candidature of Austrians for international organisations. Thus begins the making of a pariah in the heart of Fortress Europe, ostensibly because Mr Haider is a racist and his Freedom Party avowedly anti-immigrant.

Odious though Mr Haider's pronouncements undoubtedly have been, a closer look at the reaction his entry into government has provoked reveals a certain degree of duplicitousness on the part of his critics. The government is led by Chancellor Wolfgang Schluessel of the conservative People's Party. Mr Haider's outfit is a junior partner. The Austrian president had no choice but to allow the formation of this ministry to avoid another election in which Mr Haider's party might have received even more votes. Secondly, the agenda of the Freedom Party has forced the socialists and the conservatives to re-examine their own attitudes towards immigrants. Parties in Europe which do not sport a far-right label are often no less anti-immigrant and racist in their choice of policies. Until recently, citizenship in Germany was only for those of German blood and the Turkish immigrants who had a big hand in that country's economic revival are still second-class citizens. In France, there is uncodified discrimination against Arabs born in the country and Britain is proposing 10,000 pound bonds to keep suspected immigrants out. In Italy, the Roman Catholic church wants the government to be "more aware" of the "negative traits" of Islam when granting licences for marriages between Italians and Muslims from North Africa and Asia. For all the democratic protestations of the US, President Bill Clinton is willing to visit Pakistan and "engage" the military dictatorship there. If General Musharraf merits such solicitous engagement, then it is difficult to justify the isolation of Austria, which is more democratic than many of the regimes with which the US and the EU are doing good business.

**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

**- 7 FEB 2000**

# Protests against Haider continue in Vienna

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

VIENNA, Feb. 6. — Austrian riot police stopped hundreds of demonstrators from marching on the headquarters of the far-Right Freedom Party overnight, after sometimes violent protests against the party's inclusion in a new coalition government.

Police barred hundreds of protesters from the pedestrian road leading to the party building in the centre of town after minor scuffles. Police armoured cars and water canons were on stand-by.

Yesterday, the second day of protests, a group of marchers hurled eggs and bottles at police protecting the Vienna headquarters of Austria's Conservative People's Party, coalition partners of the Freedom Party.

Their brief attack contrasted with the attitude of the main

body of some 2,000 protesters who gathered peacefully in the city to show their disapproval of Austria's new conservative and far-Right government.

The head of the march was marked by banners proclaiming non-violent Opposition. One group of militants distributed leaflets in the crowd warning them that further violence would damage their cause.

In violence during protests on Friday, 43 police officers and 13 protesters were hurt. Most of the protesters were young Left-wingers. As well as shouting slogans condemning Mr Joerg Haider's Freedom Party, the crowds attacked privatisation and demanded "jobs for all".

**Israel appeal:** Israel urged the world today to take action against Austria, saying its new government incorporated elements of a neo-Nazi nature,

adds Reuters from Jerusalem.

"This is a dark day for Austrian democracy and a sad day for the family of free nations," Israel's Cabinet said in a statement. The Cabinet Secretary, Mr Yitzhak Herzog, said the government would consider further steps but he declined to specify.

Israel recalled its ambassador from Vienna on Friday, saying that as the homeland of Holocaust survivors, it could not tolerate the inclusion in the government of Freedom Party led by Mr Haider, who caused a world outcry over past remarks — for which he apologised later — belittling the crimes of the Nazis. "The government of Israel sees its duty and role in facing the nations of the world and warning against the severe phenomenon that a Western European government incorporates elements of a neo-Nazi nature," the statement said.



# Austrian Cabinet starts work

REUTERS

VIENNA, Feb. 7. — Austria's new government starts work today faced with the uphill battle of persuading the world that it is trustworthy despite half its members belonging to Mr Joerg Haider's far-Right Freedom Party.

Mr Haider himself said yesterday he might ask for a parliamentary investigations into foreign media reports that President Thomas Klestil and former Social Democrat Chancellor Viktor Klima had orchestrated the hostile reaction from the 14 EU partners to the government.

Mr Klestil and Mr Klima, although highly critical of the Freedom Party chief, have vehemently denied the reports.

"It would also be in the interest of those under suspicion to prove in a credible way to an investigative committee that they have nothing to do with it, that they have not committed some sort of political treason against Austria," he told ORF television.

Mr Haider also visited Berlin yesterday and faced 500 demonstrators shouting "Nazis out" when he arrived at a hotel in the city centre.

**THE STATESMAN**

- 8 FEB 2000

# Finland elects its first woman President

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

HELSINKI, Feb. 7. — Foreign minister Tarja Halonen, a single mother and one-time social activist, has been elected President of Finland after narrowly defeating a conservative male rival in a closely-fought contest.

"The election for the first time of a woman to the presidency is encouraging," Ms Halonen told reporters after her victory was announced and her opponent, Mr Esko Aho, conceded defeat yesterday.

Ms Halonen, who pledged in her campaign to preserve the welfare-state system in Finland and to defend human rights and minorities, said she would try to "develop contacts" between the presidency and the people of Finland. Final voting results published by the justice ministry gave Ms Halonen 51.6 per cent support among Finland's 4.1 million registered voters.

**DPA adds:** The Finnish presidency, once a position of political power, will be largely ceremonial when a new constitution goes into effect in March.

Powers, especially in the foreign affairs and security areas, will be curbed. Ms Halonen takes over on 1 March from Mr Ahtisaari, who decided against running for a second six-year term.

The campaigns had been lacklustre, focusing on the personalities of the two candidates, as

well as their age differences and the fact that for the first time a woman had a good chance of being elected.

The candidates mostly avoided political issues until a final live television debate at the weekend during which they took opposite positions on the

wisdom of European Union leaders imposing polit-

ical sanctions on Austria following the formation of a new government including Mr Joerg Haider's far-Right Freedom Party. Ms Halonen, strongly defended the Finnish government's firm backing of the EU leaders' action. Mr Aho, who became Finland's youngest prime minister in 1991, criticised the move.



Finland's new President, Ms Tarja Halonen, celebrates her victory at an election party on Sunday. — AP/PTI

THE STATESMAN

- 8 FEB 2000

# Sinn Fein threatens legal action

CHRISTOPHER WALKER  
THE TIMES, LONDON

BELFAST, Feb. 7. — The crisis over terrorist weapons in Northern Ireland deepened last night, as Sinn Fein threatened a legal challenge against Britain if power-sharing institutions are suspended this week.

Mr Alex Maskey, a Sinn Fein Assembly member, said his party had taken legal advice over a court action to back its claim that suspension of the Executive and Assembly, if no IRA arms are forthcoming, would be a breach of the Good Friday Agreement.

Another leading Sinn Fein politician and member of Parliament, Mr Caoimhghin O Caolain, warned that the Unionist deadline of next Saturday was the best way of ensuring that the IRA never gave up its huge arsenal of weapons.

To secure support from Dublin at a time when the IRA is under mounting international pressure to compromise, Mr Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, called on the Irish government to resist any efforts to suspend the institutions. He said: "The govern-

ment has a responsibility to hold the British government to its international, legal and moral commitments."

There is strain between London and Dublin about the handling of the crisis by Mr Peter Mandelson, the Northern Ireland Secretary. Legal experts here said that if court

action were taken on the basis that Britain was in breach of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and of an international treaty, Mr Mandelson, and possibly Mr Tony Blair, could find themselves sum-

moned to the High Court to defend the government's action. The Sinn Fein move came as the Unionists hardened their position that nothing less than an actual handover of IRA arms can prevent a collapse of the nine-week old executive. As frantic behind-the-scenes activities continued to little avail, it emerged that even if an IRA timetable for disarming came about, understood now to be Mr Mandelson's prime goal, it would be insufficient to save the Good Friday institutions.



Gerry Adams: tough talk

THE STATESMAN

- 8 FEB 2000

## Haider stirs another hornets' nest

**BERLIN, FEB. 7.** Mr. Joerg Haider, the rightist leader whose Freedom Party is part of the new Austrian Government, said on Sunday that ethnic Germans expelled from what was Czechoslovakia at the end of World War II should be entitled to the same compensation as Austrian Jews persecuted by the Nazis.

The statement reopened an old, often suppressed grievance in the German-speaking world. It centres on the expulsion from their homes or the imprisonment in the Soviet Union of millions of Germans in the aftermath of Hitler's war and the lack of compensation for their losses or suffering. The remarks of the Freedom Party leader seemed certain to intensify international unease over Mr. Haider, whose intermittently revisionist views have included statements — later apologised for — praising aspects of Hitler's rule.

By equating the suffering of the Sudeten Germans with Jewish victims of the Holocaust just a few days after signing a declaration saying that "the crimes of the Holocaust are without precedent in history," Mr. Haider appeared likely to heighten international concern that his word is worth little or nothing.

"A patriotic government should be able to draw the consequences of the past by compensating Sudeten Germans," Mr. Haider said in an interview with German television, adding that the compensation should be similar to that received by Austrian Jews for their persecution in World War II. The ethnic Germans of the Sudetenland constituted over 22 per cent of Czechoslovakia's population before the war. This large German minority, many of them Nazi supporters, provided the excuse for Hitler's dismemberment of Cze-

choslovakia. Abandoned by its Western allies at Munich, Czechoslovakia first bowed in 1938 to Hitler's demand that the Sudetenland be ceded to him. The next year, it capitulated to Nazi forces.

In the same interview, Mr. Haider suggested that the European campaign against Austria had been orchestrated by the President, Mr. Thomas Klestil, who reluctantly swore in the Government on Friday. Mr. Haider added that he might try to start a parliamentary inquiry into "high political treason" by the conservative President. Mr. Haider accused the former Social Democratic Chancellor, Mr. Viktor Klima, of taking part in the same "treasonous" acts. — *New York Times*

40-79/2 **Haider tries to woo Britain**

**VIENNA, FEB. 8.** Mr. Joerg Haider stepped up his attempt to win international respectability on Monday by inviting the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, to come to Austria to approve the work of his far-Right Freedom Party.

Mr. Haider said Mr. Blair would be an ideal "peacemaker" to help calm the storm of criticism that has greeted the Freedom Party's entry into power with Austria's conservative People's Party.

He issued his invitation after likening the Freedom Party's political programme to that of New Labour, saying that the British Government was clearly less hostile to him than the other European Union countries.

"I think he should come to Austria to make a contribution to settle the situation because he has a good reputation and could make a contribution. He could be the peacemaker."

Mr. Haider said he saw similarities between them on a range of policies, including education, tax reform, and enthusiasm for modern technology. His comments outraged many British ministers, who called him an international mischief-maker.

Mr. Keith Vaz, Britain's Minister for Europe, said: "There is absolutely nothing in common between Mr. Haider and Tony Blair. Not in a thousand years is there going to be anything in common between the two gentlemen or the programmes of his



**Tony Blair**

party and the Labour Party," he told BBC Radio.

Mr. Vaz said the Government fully supported its 13 European Union partners who had cut off contacts with Austria as long as the politician remained part of the country's coalition government.

He denied the suggestion that Britain and Austria shared the experience of being an outsider among E.U. states and that Britain had taken a more moderate line towards Vienna. "He is an attention-seeker and what he is

seeking to do is to try to pretend we are acting in any way in a different from our European colleagues," said Mr. Vaz.

"We are just as tough and robust as the other European countries in dealing with his administration. We have made it clear that we support everything that the Portuguese presidency has done."

Mr. Haider, who has praised some of Hitler's policies during his rise to power, became embroiled in further domestic controversy on Monday after accusing Mr. Thomas Klestil, the Austrian President, and Mr. Viktor Klima, former Socialist Chancellor, of possible "high treason".

Mr. Haider called for a parliamentary inquiry because he believes the two men encouraged E.U. leaders at a recent Holocaust conference in Stockholm to threaten Austria with isolation should the right-wing coalition be formed.

He believes this was done because the two leaders thought it the only way to block the coalition. Mr. Haider said he would press the case for high treason if it was proved that they "had informed other members of the European Community to whip up opposition."

Mr. Haider sees this as an undue interference in Austrian democracy. The Freedom Party won 27 per cent of the vote in last year's general election, fractionally more than the Conservatives with whom they are now in the

Government. The coalition has ended over 30 years of socialist-led government in Austria.

A spokesman for Mr. Klima and the President have strongly rejected the claims. Speaking of Mr. Klima, his political enemy, Mr. Haider said: "It is against the constitution if he is behaving like this in the interests of his political position."

Mr. Haider asserted that he was the victim of a smear campaign by socialist politicians in Austria. "A young politician comes along and wins all the elections. Two parties had carved up political power here for years. That is what makes them angry." — ©Telegraph Group Ltd., London, 2000.



**Joerg Haider**

# World will eventually accept us, claims embattled Haider

*If I come to power, some may regret what they said'*

BY MICHAEL THURSTON

Agentfurt (Austria), Feb. 8: Far-right leader Joerg Haider batted off international condemnation on Monday, saying the world would eventually accept his party and predicting he could be Austria's Chancellor after the next elections.

"If we stay in government and make a good job, in a few months the Freedom Party will be fully accepted and some others will have to regret what they have threatened against the Freedom Party," Mr Haider said at a press conference on Monday.

"I have no ambition to become Prime Minister or Chancellor of Austria in the next years," he said. But pressed on what will happen at the next elections, which if the coalition survives should take place in four year's time, he said "What's coming afterwards I cannot say". "Perhaps the next election gives us the chance to be the strongest party, and under this condition I'm sure the President has to give me the mandate to form a government. I will be well prepared to lead a government of reform under the Freedom Party and we will take ideas from the program of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, for instance" he said.

Mr Haider does not have a portfolio in the new government sworn in last Friday.

But many fear that the investiture of six Freedom Party ministers already gives the far-right, with its anti-Europe and anti-immigrant

policies, a dangerous degree of influence.

Since Joerg Haider's party took power in a coalition with new Chancellor Wolfgang Scheussel's Conservatives, Mr Haider has been snubbed by both western governments and opponents in Austria. The United States announced its ambassador to Vienna would leave the country indefinitely on Tuesday.

Bulgaria's foreign minister Nadejda Mikhailova demanded reassurance from the Austrian government that it will not oppose expansion of the European Union, and Canada announced plans to downgrade bilateral relations with Austria.

The Czech foreign ministry said on Friday that it was "concerned" that Freedom Party influenced foreign policy would see Austria take a firm line against European Union expansion, and said Mr Haider's comparison of the fate of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe to the expulsion of Germans from the Sudetenland during World War-II was "unacceptable."

Mr Haider said in an interview with the French television channel France 2 that he was astonished at the European Union's action. "I don't understand why the European Union should be so afraid of a little Austrian party," he said, adding, "It seems a bit excessive to me, but you will see in the weeks and months to come that the Freedom Party lives up to its name." he said. (AFP)

## EU will host far-right minister at Lisbon meet

Brussels, Feb. 8: Austria's far-right social affairs minister Ms Elisabeth Sickl is being invited to a meeting with EU counterparts in Lisbon on Friday, but it remains to be seen how welcome she will be.

Portugal's mission to the European Union in Brussels confirmed on Monday that Ms Sickl, a prominent member of Mr Joerg Haider's Freedom Party, was being invited to the day-long informal gathering of social affairs ministers.

"The invitation was sent on Monday afternoon," an official at the mission told reporters, ending several days of speculation in Brussels as to whether Ms Sickl, 59, would be asked to attend.

Friday's meeting, mainly to plan for a March 23-24 EU summit in Lisbon on jobs, social policy and a "knowledge-based" Europe, will be the first test of the Freedom Party's ability to work with its many EU critics.

Early indications were not hopeful. Belgian employment minister Ms Laurette Onkelinx, through a spokeswoman, said she regretted the decision to invite Ms Sickl, and intended to treat her "as if she is non-existent" and "she will not greet her or talk to her." (AFP)

THE ASIAN AGE

- 9 FEB 2000

# Ulster talks on for a breakthrough

By Thomas Abraham

**LONDON, FEB. 11.** The crisis over Northern Ireland reached boiling point today, as the British Government prepared to restore direct rule to the province barring a last minute announcement from the IRA that it was prepared to lay down its weapons.

The Legislation suspending the Northern Ireland Assembly has been rushed through Parliament, and it is for the British Minister in charge of Northern Ireland, Mr. Mandelson, to decide when to give effect to it.

Mr. Mandelson faces a stark choice: if he does not dissolve the Assembly, the leader of the Ulster Unionists, Mr. David Trimble, will resign his post as First Minister of Northern Ireland, probably giving way to a more hardline leader. If he does dissolve it, the Sinn Fein, political wing of the IRA, will be furious, and its leaders have indicated that any prospect of getting the IRA lay down its weapons will vanish.

Last minute negotiations are on to avert a disaster. Mr. Trimble met the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Mr. Bertie Ahern, in Dublin to discuss the Irish Government's efforts to persuade the IRA to move towards decommissioning. After their meeting, Mr. Ahern said he would continue working until the last minute to rescue the peace agreement. "I am conscious of time but regardless, we must work on." He, however, said even if this present crisis could not be averted, the peace process could still be rescued. "If we can find resolution now, great. If not, we just have to keep at it. We will keep on working together," he said.

The British Government is not optimistic of a breakthrough and a spokesman for the Prime Minister said something "fairly dramatic" would have to happen to keep the Northern Ireland Assembly alive.

The crisis has been triggered by a demand by the Ulster Unionists that the IRA at least make a token gesture towards decommissioning by the beginning of February. The peace agreement sets a deadline of May 22 to end the process but does not say when it should begin.

The Sinn Fein has argued that the deadline of February has been arbitrarily imposed by the Ulster Unionists, and has urged the British Government not to take notice of it. Those elements in the Sinn Fein and the IRA, who have argued within the organisation in favour of participating in the political process and trying to achieve their political aims through democratic means, fear that a suspension of the Government will hand a victory to hardliners within the organisation.

But there is increasing impatience across the political spectrum in Northern Ireland with the IRA for its refusal to move on laying down its weapons. The IRA has said that it has maintained a ceasefire for five years now, and effectively put aside its weapons.

The IRA clearly faces a major psychological hurdle in decommissioning its weapons. It sees itself as an army which was formed to fight Britain. To lay down its weapons at a time when Northern Ireland is still part of the United Kingdom is seen as a surrender. It has indicated unequivocally that it is committed to the peace agreement and has no intention of resuming its armed struggle. But it cannot hand its weapons over. Instead, what the Sinn Fein and the IRA appear to be contemplating is assuring the British Government that its weapons will be effectively decommissioned by a permanent ceasefire.

This, however, is not good enough for the Ulster Unionists or the British Government, who want to see a hand over of weapons and a definite end to the IRA's existence as an armed organisation.

Barring a last minute miracle, Mr. Mandelson is expected to suspend the Assembly and suggest a "cooling off period" and a review of the peace process to find a way forward. But clearly the longer the review lasts, the more difficult it will be to restart the momentum that had built up behind the peace process.

Ironically, the suspension of the two-month-old Northern Ireland Government will come at a time when it had just begun to hit its stride, with the Protestant and Catholic Ministers learning to work together.

# Britain is ready to impose direct rule on Ireland

BY MARIE-NOELLE VALLES

**Belfast, Feb. 11:** Britain was poised on Friday to restore direct rule over Northern Ireland and suspend the province's new power-sharing government, as an 11th-hour call for the IRA to make a disarmament gesture showed little sign of bearing fruit.

Northern Ireland minister Peter Mandelson said that only a clear statement from the Irish Republican Army setting out when and how it would hand in its weapons could save the day.

But despite a flurry of talks, time was running out for a swift resolution to the crisis, the latest and possibly most serious to hit the peace process since the Good Friday accord was signed in April 1998.

In London, Prime Minister Tony Blair's official spokesman said it would take something "very dramatic" to stop Mr Mandelson from suspending the new cross-community institutions. A decision was expected later on Friday.

"It looks as though this is the direction we are going," he said.

The row erupted late last month when Unionists, who share power with Republicans in the new government, accused the IRA of failing to live up to disarmament promises. Unionist leader David Trimble threatened to bring down the executive and walk away from

the peace process if there was no verifiable start to disarmament. A meeting on Saturday of his party in Belfast was understood to be the deadline for the demand.

Mr Mandelson is keen to preempt that move so as to keep Trimble on board, and hence favours putting devolution in cold storage, to be revived at a later stage once the dispute has been resolved.

But the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein has warned that such a move will alienate republican paramilitaries and make the prospect of disarmament even more remote.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams has even hinted that he would reconsider his position, another unpalatable prospect given his key role as the go-between with the IRA.

"Even at this late hour (Mandelson) must pull back from the disastrous course on which he appears to be set," said Sinn Fein number two Martin McGuinness. "We are still striving to resolve this matter," he said on Friday. "We still believe that the Good Friday agreement is the only show in town."

Under the agreement, paramilitary formations had until mid-May to turn in their guns, but Mr Trimble's Unionists only agreed to participate in the government if decommissioning started by February. (AFP)

THE ASIAN AGE

12 FEB 2000



# Haider-phobia!

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**O**N FRIDAY, February 4, when Austria's President, Mr. Thomas Klestil, inducted a new Government that included six Ministers from the far-right "freedom party" of Mr. Jorg Haider, not only 14 fellow members of the European Union but also the United States and Israel showed their displeasure by severing political contacts and downgrading diplomatic relations with Austria.

And outside Vienna's Hofburg Presidential Palace, from where Austrian emperors ruled over the great Hapsburg empire which spanned central and southern Europe for nearly a century, anti-Haider protestors clashed with riot-police. Early this week, Britain's Prince Charles cancelled a scheduled visit to Austria on the advice of the British Foreign Office and in Holland, Queen Beatrix sparked off a controversy over her recent public engagement in Vienna.

Austria, after Germany and France, is the third richest country in the European Union. Today it is politically and diplomatically isolated.

The average Austrian is not only perplexed but in a deep quandary about the international rumpus over the advent of Mr. Haider's Freedom Party on the national scene. So far, Mr. Haider has chosen to remain technically 'out' of the rightist coalition Government and, at best, proposes to rule by 'remote control' until the world at large comes to terms with his politics and personality.

In the past, much of Mr. Haider politics was laced with layers of xenophobic padding which undermines West European liberal values of democracy and racial tolerance. Racism and extreme right wing politics in the E.U. countries are also a reality, if the harsh treatment often meted out to foreign immigrants is any criterion, but there are European institutions which exercise moderation and advocate more tolerance. Mr. Haider's fault was that he almost proposed to institutionalise racism with his nostalgic references to the glories of Nazi ideology.

This is the main reason why the E.U. would like Mr. Haider to either disappear or drastically reform himself.

For the first time since the collapse of the 'Third Reich', a far right party with a strong racist agenda has come to power in a West European country. This then is at the heart of the matter. But, since February 4, Mr. Haider has been profusely apologising for his "mistaken judgment" in the past and claims that he is neither a racist nor a fascist, but his remorse lacks credibility.

Most Austrians agree that the man is essentially a brilliant opportunist, whose great ambition is to one day be the Chancellor of Austria. Mr. Haider is a pragmatist and a talented political tactician and for the first time in over three decades, he and the populist right wing parties have shaken the so-

cial democrats and the conservative alliance, which dominated Austrian

politics since the war. The new right wing coalition of the Peoples Party and the Freedom Party is led by the new Chancellor, Mr. Wolfgang Schuessel, who promises an agenda of less taxes, less red tape, less welfare benefits, drastic curbs on immigrants and above all an efficient and transparent Government. Mr. Schuessel is essentially a career politician who lacks Mr. Haider's charisma.

even before Austria was annexed by the Nazis in 1938 and young Jorg attracted the attention of extreme rightwing elements and grew up with a rightwing xenophobic agenda.

Now at 50, Mr. Haider saw himself on the verge of becoming Chancellor, but he underestimated the E.U.'s response.

The Haider phenomenon has triggered massive and diplomatic convulsions in major E.U. capitals, he is seen as personifying Austria's controversial

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***As a result of the rise of Mr. Jorg Haider, Austria today is politically and diplomatically isolated, says***  
**BATUK GATHANI.**

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Mr. Haider's rise to power began last October when the Freedom Party won an astonishing 27 per cent of the popular vote in the national elections and emerged as an electoral power to reckon with between two largest Austrian parties — the Peoples Party and the Social Democrats. Observers point out that a major reason for the emergence of the so-called 'black' right wing alliance was Mr. Schuessel's ambition to be Chancellor at any cost.

Pragmatism dictated that he had little choice but to enter into an alliance with Mr. Haider. The men are strange bed-fellows. Mr. Schuessel is a traditional lacklustre conservative. Mr. Haider, on the other hand represents the darker side of Austrian history. His parents were avid followers of Adolf Hitler

past and its links with the Nazis which ranged from participating in crimes of Hitler's Third Reich to the controversial presidency of Kurt Waldheim, a former officer in the Nazi army.

Many Austrians bitterly resent the pariah state treatment and passionately argue that their society is basically decent, liberal and very European, but the Haider stigma wears heavily on the country. Mr. Haider and Mr. Schuessel have taken out full-page advertisements in prominent European newspapers to reiterate their democratic and liberal perceptions.

Should Mr. Haider be given the benefit of the doubt when he says he is a "born again" liberal and a democrat? His friends and foes both agree that he is a controversial man and a ruthless opportunist.

Observers note that while the E.U.'s unanimous and stern response expresses fine sentiments about democracy, it also offends the fundamental democratic principle that the popular will of the Austrian people expressed in an election deserves respect. The reality is that Mr. Haider has 27 per cent of the popular vote — one in four Austrian voters has backed him. The present coalition hence is what the Austrian public wanted.

Both parties have also reiterated that they will honour liberal democratic European values, support the E.U. expansion and denounce and refrain from any form of racism. Despite all this, there are major questions about Mr. Haider and his politics. He is a talented orator or a demagogue, depending on the individual's perception of his talents.

Many observers are also convinced that Austria's isolation in the E.U.'s political forums may even boost Mr. Haider's popularity since many Austrian voters feel that their sovereignty is abused when they are told by fellow European states whom they should or should not elect.

Austrian analysts believe that today a fresh election may attract one-third of the popular vote for Mr. Haider. More caution and restraint is advised before further isolating or insulting Austria. Mr. Schuessel says the international response is both "exaggerated and unrealistic" as he reiterates Austria's liberal and democratic heritage.

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*Clinton*  
**IRA concedes an inch** 138/2

By Thomas Abraham 1

**LONDON, FEB. 12.** The British Government re-imposed direct rule in Northern Ireland late on Friday night, just two months after a devolved government was set up in Belfast. But a last minute indication from the Irish Republican Army (IRA) on when it would lay down its weapons raised hopes that the suspension of the Northern Ireland Executive might be lifted soon.

The British Minister for Northern Ireland, Mr. Peter Mandelson, said a report handed in yesterday by the international commission on decommissioning headed by Gen. John De Chastelain indicated movement on the part of the IRA. The report said the IRA had indicated the "context within which the IRA will initiate a comprehensive process to put arms beyond use, in a manner as to ensure maximum public confidence."

Mr. Mandelson said the report contained the potential for him to restart the provincial Government but added that clarifications were still required on when the IRA would actually lay down its weapons. "I think that if we get those clarifications that are needed and a clear commitment by the IRA to decommission — we haven't got that commitment yet and a suggested time-frame within which this would occur, that would open up the way for me to rescind the suspension." A spokesman for the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, described it as "a



development of real significance," adding that "it will form the basis of our continuing discussions."

**Clinton sees real progress**

Reuters reports from Washington:

The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton said he regretted that the IRA had not made a more timely commitment to disarm but said there were some signs of progress to resolve the Northern Ireland dispute.

Mr. Clinton yesterday said there had been some progress in the past few days, citing a report by the independent disarmament commission which said the IRA had given a commitment holding out some hope that

an agreement on disarmament might be within reach. "I regret that the IRA did not give the De Chastelain commission a more timely commitment on arms decommissioning," Mr. Clinton said in a statement. "At the same time, we have seen real progress in the past few days," he added. "This progress is reflected in the most recent report from the De Chastelain commission, which states that the commitment made by the IRA's representative 'holds out the real prospect of an agreement which would enable (the commission) to fulfil the substance of its mandate,'" Mr. Clinton added.

In his statement, Mr. Clinton called on all the parties to carry out the Good Friday accord, saying it had the support of the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland. "I urge all the parties to build on that progress, remain engaged and carry through on their responsibilities to work together to achieve the full implementation of the Good Friday accord," Mr. Clinton said in the statement.

Earlier yesterday, Mr. Clinton told reporters that he and his administration had been "heavily involved" in trying to help break the deadlock in the peace process. The White House spokesman, Mr. Joe Lockhart said Mr. Clinton had been on the phone with parties to the dispute several times this week and would remain engaged in the search for a solution.

IN history, nothing important ever disappears, but nothing remains the same. In West Asia, the decisive events — the wars of Alexander, the rise and fall of the Byzantine Empire, the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire, the rise of Islam, Zionism and the creation of the new state of Israel, Arab independence, oil, the arrival of the USA — are between 50 and 3,000 years old. We are still living under the impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon. Western Europe exists in the post-Napoleonic context.

That does not trouble us; it was Victorian, not 20th century, children who were told that if they were naughty, "Boney will come for you". But what about Hitler? We are still ashamed to admit that his impact on European history has been greater than that of any other 20th-century leader. We are still living in the Europe he did much to shape; that helps to explain the hysterical anxieties that have been aroused by Jorg Haider, the Austrian nationalist leader. Haider is no Hitler; not even his ghost.

In February 1942, Adolf Hitler entertained a Danish member of the SS to dinner. He was in a relaxed mood, and explained his ambitions for Europe: "I've always rebelled against the idea that Europe has reached the end of its mission, and that the hour of Russia or the United States had come... why shouldn't we have the strength necessary to become one of the world's centres of attraction? 120 million people of German stock, when they've consolidated their positions, that's a force against which nobody in the world will be able to do anything. I see it in my own case. My native land is one of the most beautiful countries in the Reich, but what can it do when left to itself? What could I undertake as an Austrian...? If Germany hadn't had the good fortune to let me take power in 1933, Europe today would no longer exist... confronted with the innumerable populations of the East, we cannot exist except on condition that all Germanics are united. They must compose the nucleus around which Europe will federate."

The ideal of a federal Europe, organised around a German core, did not vanish when Hitler committed suicide. It would be a perfectly fair description of the European policy of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the most powerful European statesman of the 1980s and 1990s. From 1940 to 1945, Hitler created a united Europe

# Is this the next Adolf?

Europe should stop being hysterical about Jorg Haider, at least until he does something, writes WILLIAM REES-MOGG



JORG HAIDER: a populist, a nationalist and a propagandist

under German leadership. This not only foreshadowed but made possible the EU which has been created since the war. Napoleon's Europe made Bismarck's Germany possible; Bismarck's Germany made Hitler's Europe possible; Hitler's Europe made the Europe of Brussels possible. That is the historic chain of events.

Mr Haider does not share Hitler's anti-Semitism. Nor does he share the geopolitical ambitions of the Nazis. "Today Germany, Tomorrow the World," is not his slogan, nor could it be. He describes himself as a "European", but he is primarily an Austrian nationalist, equally determined to defend Austria against immigrants and meddling from Brussels. This might change if he saw the opportunity to play a wider European role, but that seems unlikely. He does, however, have a strong appeal to the grandchildren of the old Nazi constituency, certainly inside Austria, perhaps potentially in Germany.

Mr Haider may not share Nazi anti-Semitism or Hitler's European federalism, but he does play some of the Nazi tunes, including some of which the Nazis had no monopoly. He is a populist, a nationalist, a propagandist; he exploits the cult of the leader; he exploits the cult of youth; he makes politics exciting; he appeals to the mass fear of foreigners. All of these formed part of Hitler's own political repertoire; some of them have also been associated with perfectly democratic leaders, such as President John F Kennedy or, as Mr Haider observes, Tony Blair.

cancelled. But this is not the case."

The European response, including that of the British government, has been trivial and ineffective. Cancelling diplomatic invitations may irritate, but it does not coerce. The new Austrian government includes people whose views few of us share: as far as I am concerned, the same could be said of some members of every other European government. Yet the European treaties do not give the other European countries any right to intervene on the basis of opinion. Intervention could happen only as the result of undemocratic actions, and so far there have been none. If Mr Haider were to become a dictator, Austria could indeed be expelled from the EU. But there is no justification for cancelling diplomatic invitations when nothing has yet happened.

If there were no election, Austria would be forced back into its increasingly corrupt, 50-year-old Red-Black coalition. If there were an election, Mr Haider's vote would surely rise. He is, after all, a nationalist, and it is the national independence of Austria which is being insulted by these petty slights.

We should return to normal European relations with Austria, unless or until the new Austrian government takes some step which is anti-democratic, which threatens world peace, or endangers human rights. It is acts, not thoughts, which matter.

The return of normal relations would be only the first step. The danger of Nazism arose in the first place because the politicians of the Weimar Republic were unable to overcome certain problems, including the threat of Communism, German inflation and the world slump. The Weimar parties, like those in modern Austria, were forced by a proportional electoral system into unwelcome coalition. There was too much corruption.

The threat of Communism has disappeared, so, for the present, have the twin spectres of inflation and slump. But the proportional electoral systems still produce weak coalitions in much of Europe. The governments suffer from corruption. That may give an opening to the post-Nazi or post-Fascist parties of the extreme Right. Mr Haider feeds off the popular appeal of some of the Nazi themes with the Austrian electorate; he also feeds off the weaknesses of Austrian and European governance.

— *The Times, London.*

57-9  
IRA pulls out of  
disarmament talks

CHRISTOPHER WALKER  
THE TIMES, LONDON

LONDON, Feb. 16. — Serious doubts about the future of the IRA's ceasefire were raised last night, after it pulled out of all disarmament talks and withdrew any previous offers of compromise. This has prompted questions about whether the Good Friday peace process can long survive. Yesterday's statement made no reference to the present ceasefire, but it accused the government and the Ulster Unionists of rejecting the propositions put to General John de Chastelain's disarmament commission last Friday, in an eleventh hour attempt to stave off the suspension of the Stormont executive. "They obviously have no desire to deal with the issue of arms except on their own terms," the IRA charged. "Those who seek a military victory in this way need to understand that this cannot, and will not happen. Those who have made the political process conditional on the decommissioning of silenced IRA guns, are responsible for the current crisis in the peace process."

The statement was accompanied by a warning from Mr Gerry Adams that Sinn Fein would play no part in a new review designed to rescue the deal. The review is being led jointly by Mr Peter

Mandelson, the Northern Ireland secretary, and the Irish Foreign Minister, Brian Cowen, who have been at loggerheads about the suspended Stormont executive.

The IRA's action has also thrown a shadow over today's summit meeting between Mr Tony Blair and Mr Bertie Ahern in London.

**White House promise:** The White House yesterday vowed to mediate peace in Northern Ireland, but acknowledged that the Irish Republican Army's withdrawal from a disarmament commission was a setback, adds Reuters from Washington.

"We regret any hint of backtracking on the recent progress made in establishing clarity on decommissioning," White House spokesman, Mr Joe Lockhart, said.

"We're going to continue to work this from all sides," Mr Lockhart said, adding, "obviously this is not a positive development, but it's not a reason to give up on the process."

Mr Lockhart reacted cautiously when asked if the IRA had broken its word. "Let me just say this. We have called on all sides to comply with commitments made in respect to the Good Friday accords. We will continue to work with all sides in order to have a process where they can do that," he said.

THE STATESMAN

17 FEB 2000

# Heil Haidar! Austria sets a date with past

OF  
CABBAGES  
AND  
KINGS



FARRUKH DHONDY

*"Those who believe in the stars  
Are doomed to suffer their  
indifference."*

From The Proverbs of Bach-  
choo

**H**eil Haidar! Sounds as good. Old fascists never die, they only smell that way. Twenty six per cent of the Austrian electorate voted for Jorg Haider's Freedom Party and as a consequence the parliamentary fraction of the party has been invited by the Austrian Conservatives to join with them in a coalition, enabling for the first time after World War II, a party avowedly sympathetic to the fascist past, soft on aspects of the Third Reich and professing xenophobic policies which are seen as neo-Nazi, into government.

Their entry into government is traumatic for Austria and for the rest of Europe. The presence of this amorphous creature below the surface of the psyche of Europe, a lurking of hate, a negation of the whole human, social instinct is a dirty secret. It cannot be allowed to bubble to the surface and it must not be allowed to spread itself on emergence like a mist over the waters. Now it has. Europe has a Nazi party in the government of a state which is a signatory to the European Union treaties, those whose aim is the final elimination of all war from Europe, albeit under the banner of shared and liberal capitalism.

The paradox of Austria is that the EU and therefore its individual partner states, who have fought two recent wars — one in the Gulf and one in Kosovo — in the name of democracy, cannot deny this governing principle to the voters of Austria, or at least to 26 per cent of them. There is no ordinance banning the Freedom Party from contesting elections and neither can there be. The spirit of democratic Constitutions demands that the will of the people be manifested in the shape and politics of a party and as any democrat knows, policies and manifestoes are fluid, conventions

can be breached and restrictions navigated around. One can even imagine a situation in which a party avoids being banned by keeping all its open pronouncements on this side of the line of rampant racism or triumphal murderousness, relying on the fact that all its supporters and potential supporters know what its real intentions are.

This is indeed what several parties in Europe rely on. The National Front and the British Movement, though never a real political threat

**E**very child knows that one can cross one's fingers and toes and mutter oaths which are then rendered invalid in the sight of God.

One of the tenets of democracy is of course freedom of thought and freedom of expression and association. It has long been understood and agreed that one may believe what one likes. One may even say what one likes providing it is not an abuse of others or an instigation to deny someone else their rights

within these sceptred isles, have pretty nasty manifestoes which speak of state assisted repatriation for immigrant communities and racist statements about law and order. No gas ovens or barbed wire are mentioned, but it is axiomatic that supporters of these groups believe that something of the methods and disciplines of the Nazi order will be restored if they gain power.

Democracy has to rely on the good sense of majorities to somehow see the folly of Nazism. Haidar's inclusion in the ruling coalition, part of the greed of the Austrian conservatives for power on any terms, has been met with a withdrawal

of Israel's diplomats and a warning from the US that it is displeased. Austria's partners in Europe have also expressed their displeasure and there are several lobbies in Europe which recommend sanctions against the country for having a sizeable minority who voted neo-Nazi.

If a majority had voted for the Freedom Party and Haidar had formed his own government, the riots that met with his inclusion in the present government may have spilled over into civil war and Europe would have had to find ways of intervening on the side of the revolt.

If they had all voted for Haidar, Austria would at the least be expelled from the EU and in the extreme be invaded and pacified by Nato or some alliance of European neighbours. And all this not for doing but for thinking and for saying things.

Haidar's party was only allowed to join the government after the President extracted from them a condemnation of the sins of the Nazi past and an oath to work within the rules. Every child knows that one can cross one's fingers and toes and mutter oaths which are then rendered invalid in the sight of God.

One of the tenets of democracy is of course freedom of thought and freedom of expression and association. It has long been understood and agreed that one may believe what one likes. One may even say what one likes providing it is not an abuse of others or an instigation to deny someone else their rights — a "kill the Jews" or "demolish the mosques" sort of cry.

**A**ll civilised societies draw the line at actions, which may be actually rounding up people on the basis of ethnicity, actually demolishing mosques or smashing temples or merely legislating in a parliament to enable such acts. Haidar's Party has done no such thing, taken no such actions. It has come to power by appealing to visceral instincts and perhaps to some vague dream of volk power.

Contrary to all the cautionary promptings of history, which tell me that nasty minorities have ways of becoming inevitable majorities, I think that xenophobia as the basis of the governance of Europe is dead. Yes there will be stricter immigration controls here and there. There will be unfair treat-

# Sinn Fein blocks N Ireland peace deal escape route

PHILIP WEBSTER and DAMIAN WHITWORTH  
THE TIMES, LONDON

LONDON, Feb. 17. — The Good Friday Agreement on Northern Ireland was strained to breaking point last night, when Mr Gerry Adams refused to take part in a formal review designed to keep the peace process alive.

The deal, struck nearly two years ago appeared to be in danger of stalling completely after crisis talks chaired in Downing Street by Mr Tony Blair and Mr Bertie Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister, produced no sign of progress.

Mr Adams, the Sinn Fein president, and Mr David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists, emerged grim-faced from No 10 to deliver equally hardline messages: Sinn Fein offering no hope of advancement until the province's institutions have been restored, and the Unionists making plain that that was not possible until the IRA began disarming.

Both Prime Ministers appealed after the talks, not to let the chance of peace slip away and agreed that there was no alternative to the agreement.

Mr Adams said that Mr Blair gave no indication that the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly would be reactivated. "The institutions have been torn down and the Good Friday Agreement has been torn up," he said.

He added: "I don't think we can play a useful role on the arms issue when all we are met with is rejections and rebuttals."

Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's education minister in the suspended Executive, said that the Good Friday Agreement was "lying in the wastepaper bin".

A similarly uncompromising Mr Trimble said that the Unionists had done all they could to make the agreement work, which was why they had "jumped first" on the understanding that the Republicans would reciprocate.

THE STATESMAN  
18 FEB 2000

# Socialists will take country back to Franco years, says Spanish PM

MADRID: When Jose Maria Aznar ran for Prime Minister in 1996, his political foes tried to scare away moderate voters by branding him heir to the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco.

Four years later, with Mr Aznar seeking a second term in a general election set for March 12, the Popular Party leader and his right-wing supporters were the ones conjuring up the ghosts of Spain's bitter past.

In the final weeks of the campaign, they are warning of dark consequences if Spaniards hand

over power to the main opposition Socialist Party, which has joined forces with the Communists for the first time since the bloody civil war of the 1930s. Mr Aznar — tipped in opinion polls to win the re-election but still short of a parliamentary majority — has harshly criticised the new Leftist alliance as a “throw-back to the past that Spain wants no part of”.

His top ministers have gone even further, predicting that a Socialist-Communist administration would bring economic ruin, end Spain's

membership of the Euro Zone and pull out of NATO.

But Mr Joaquin Almunia, the Socialist candidate for prime minister, accuses Mr Aznar of reviving old right-wing conspiracy theories of a “red menace” lurking on the Spanish Left.

He charges that the use of scare tactics by Mr Aznar and the centre-right Popular Party shows they are increasingly fearful of the electoral challenge they face.

Most political analysts agree. They believe, however, that demonising the Left is a risky strategy that could backfire on Mr Aznar's government.

Since taking office as the first right-wing prime minister of the post-Franco era, Mr Aznar has worked hard to distance his party from its authoritarian roots and shift it towards the political centre.

He has boasted of his rapport with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and has tried to emulate the Labour leader's effort to recast his own party with a gentler, non-ideological image.

In his bid for re-election, Mr Aznar — a former tax inspector once seen as too colourless to last after charismatic Socialist Felipe Gonzalez — is campaigning on a record of strong economic growth and political stability.

Despite those successes, his lead in the polls is just four to five percentage points over the Socialists — a smaller margin than he enjoyed before the last election.

That is fuelling anxiety in the Popular Party's ranks now that the two largest Left-wing groupings have buried their differences to forge a loose alliance aimed at unseating Mr Aznar. (Reuters)



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VOY. RTU 074  
IGM NO. 4880

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Ex. BARBAROSSA (V 097) JAKARTA  
Ex. KOTA PERABU (V PAU 013) BUSAN / SHANGHAI  
Ex. KOTA MAWAR (V MAW 244) YANGDOON  
Ex. KOTA MAJU (V MJU 226) JAKARTA  
Ex. SEA MARINE (V SMN 124) SEMARANG  
Ex. KOTA SEJATI (V SJT 76) DALIAN / QINGDAO

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## DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL,

DELHI AT NEW DELHI

(3rd Floor, Vikrant Tower,  
Rajendra Place, New Delhi)  
In the matter of O.A. No. 380/99  
ANZ Grindlays Bank Ltd.  
(Applicant)

M/s Onida Savak Ltd.  
(Respondents)

(D-2) Sh. G.L. Mirchandani,  
22, Paras, Little Gibbs Road,  
Malabar Hills, MUMBAI.

Whereas the above named Applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 77,26,749.67 (Rupees Seventy Seven Lacs Twenty Six Thousand Seven Hundred Forty Nine & Paise Sixty Seven Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way, therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 21-3-2000 at 10.30 a.m.

Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day beforementioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

Dated this 2-2-2000 By order  
of the Tribunal

THE TIMES OF INDIA  
21 FEB 2000

## IRA's limited options

THE FIRST experiment in power-sharing in Northern Ireland in 1973 lasted only five months. The second experiment with self-rule had an even shorter span of life, 72 days to be precise. Violent loyalism and organised Protestant labour forced the earlier coalition to collapse. Even though it is the Irish Republican Army that is now blamed for its intransigence leading to the reimposition of direct British rule in Northern Ireland, Prime Minister Tony Blair too cannot escape responsibility if the IRA's threats to pull out of talks on disarmament are carried out. The historic 1998 Good Friday deal between Protestant Unionists and Roman Catholic nationalists was projected as a "triumph of courage" and was flaunted as a model for other conflict areas to follow. The experience of last two years suggests that historic enmities do not melt away so suddenly. While peace reigned in Northern Ireland, the agreement is yet to exorcise the historical ghosts of centuries of bitterness between Britain and Ireland. The two sides are presently engaged in the blame game. While Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams has blamed Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Peter Mandelson for his 'fixation' with helping David Trimble, the Unionist leader, official circles in Britain hold the IRA responsible for the present impasse.

All is of course not lost. In fact, the coalition in Dublin is still intact on paper. So is the Good Friday agreement. The IRA has been talking tough saying the 1998 accord bound only Sinn Fein and not the IRA. It has also vowed that it will never disarm under pressure. However, it has given some hints that it may in the end give up arms. To be fair to the Unionists, they had accepted the deal to form a coalition government last November along with the Sinn Fein on the specific assurance that the IRA would begin handing over weapons. An agreement that attempts to split power and sovereignty is bound to face hurdles. The two sides will do well not to squander the gains of the agreement. After all, the best hope for a deal like this lies in the realisation that the only alternative to a peace agreement is more conflict and bloodshed.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 FEB 2000



# Ostracising Austria

By Madhavan K. Palat

*The rest of the European Union, and its mentor, the U.S. are outraged that their "values" have been set at naught. Austria, not just Mr. Jorg Haider, has been curtly told to reform or face the consequences.*

110-10 22/2

AUSTRIA HAS been held guilty twice. It first visited on Europe the tragedy of the "gutter rat of Vienna", Adolf Hitler, and now she promotes the bungee-jumping farce of Jorg Haider. Vienna has been ostracised for admitting the "neo-Nazi". Mr. Haider's Freedom Party into a coalition Government under Mr. Wolfgang Schuessel, leader of the conservative People's Party. Mr. Haider is neo-Nazi because, like most people in the world, including us, he does not like immigrants; and, like so many Europeans and Americans, but unlike us, he does not seem to like Jews. He comes of impeccably Nazi parentage, despises immigrant Poles and Yugoslavs as "car thieves" and "burglars", and describes the immigrant problem as *uberfremdung* (excess of "foreignisation"). That expression enjoys a sinister or respectable pedigree as a favourite of Dr. Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda. Mr. Haider stoutly denies that he has ever uttered an anti-semitic remark, but he considers Hitler's Waffen SS "decent men" and has equated the expulsion of Jews from Austria with that of the Germans from the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia after World War II. With that xenophobic and putatively anti-semitic appeal he has had the temerity to win a democratic 27 per cent of the Austrian vote in October last year and send his party in to Government this year.

However, Europeans need not fear Hitlers readying to pounce from every dark alley in metropolitan Europe. Mr. Haider may not have any greater impact than Karl Luger, the immensely popular Mayor of Vienna, 1897-1910, given to anti-semitic rhetoric and long considered a harbinger of Hitler. During the tenure of *der schone Karl* (the handsome Charles), Jewish immigration into Vienna actually increased. The conditions that sustained a Hitler in the Thirties and the Forties are not the same as those that brought forth a Luger at the turn of the nineteenth century or a Haider at the opening of the twenty-first. Yet, the rest of the European Union, and its mentor, the U.S. are outraged that their "values" have been set at naught. Austria, not just Mr. Haider, has been curtly told to reform or face the consequences.

It would be useful to examine the power

painting where the animal's eye is lodged firmly outside its body. But that centre, wherever it be located, has in effect threatened Austria with something akin to our Article 356. We are now well placed to make world-wide offerings of Justice Sarkaria's prescriptions on Centre-State relations in lieu of Nehru's Panchsheel on international relations.

The assault on Mr. Haider's entry into Government is a measure of the mounting self-confidence of the victors of 1945 and 1991 organised as the European Union. Generally racist and xenophobic movements, as of Powellism in Britain or of Le Pen's National Front in France, have been defanged, and communist movements have been pilloried, and neither admitted to office. Yet in 1981 there were Communists in the French Government; and in 1994, Mr. Silvio Berlusconi's conservative Government in Italy took in the separatist Northern League and National Alliance, both regarded as heirs to Mussolini's Fascists.

But now Austria must pay the penalty for having voted Mr. Haider to second position. Even a social democrat would bristle in outrage at this manner of the centre's trampling on the democratic choice of a nationalist martyr. Recent opinion polls reveal that something like 33 per cent would vote for him should an election be held today. If so, Europeans and Americans would have to fashion entirely new instruments of integration and sanctions, which have not been contemplated so far. Those new instruments might well have been devised already. For, Mr. Haider complains that his Austrian social democratic opponents have assembled this European and trans-Atlantic conspiracy against him. His successful coalition politics has denied them power despite their first position in the elections with 33 per cent of the vote. If so, the European Union is following the Indian example well, with opposition parties in a State calling upon the Centre to dismiss their State Government. The European Union is well launched upon its federating career.

(The writer is Professor, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

mitted range of choice, then elections would remain a pure act of mobilisation without choice. Lenin effectively said as much to the Constituent Assembly in 1918 as he dispersed it. Mr. Yeltsin to his Supreme Soviet in 1993, and the European Union repeats that adage to Austria today. The European grouse against Soviet communists and Mr. Haider is not that they were or are undemocratic, but that they would not and will not be liberals. The American and European ruling establishments fought and won the Second World War (and even the First World War) and the Cold War to make the point; and they propose to do so again if necessary. They have already done so in Yugoslavia.

The European Union has, however, unexpectedly stumbled upon elementary aspects of creeping federation, something we have been inured to in India since 1959 when Jawaharlal Nehru dismissed a democratically-elected communist Government in Kerala. A union may subsist only to the extent that its members engage in common pursuits: in the case of the European Union that common purpose has been defined as liberal democracy, not just electoral democracy. Anyone stepping out of line threatens the coherence of the Union, as Mr. Haider might well do if permitted to flourish. We have known only too well in India the problem of governance in a federation (or union) of such diverse and incoherent policies if the member-States do not think and act as one, or, in terms of practical governance, as the Centre expects of them? Well, through the protean Article 356 of our Constitution, the Centre informs the people of the State that they had grievously erred in their selection of representatives and must mow try again. A European Union centre has barely begun to focus itself: in fact, in truly post-modern fashion, the European Union is decentred, with its centre being outside itself, in Washington, as in that prescient style of

structure and its mechanisms that require such "value" claims to be made. They belong to the victors of the three great wars of the twentieth century; which overthrew German nationalism, European fascism, and Soviet Communism. The victors are known broadly as liberal democracy, and their foes are communism and fascism. Either of the two latter phenomena shall be chastised in the name of democracy. Happless moribund communists like the Russians, or upstart crypto-fascists like Mr. Haider, who cringe at the feet of their masters by winning elections instead of unseating them in revolution, must be kicked in their teeth. Mr. Boris Yeltsin's democracy therefore shot down the democratic-socially-elected communist Supreme Soviet (parliament) in 1993 to the applause of European and American democracy; and the European Union now demands the expulsion of the democratically elected second largest party in Austria. All this makes eminent sense in European politics although it may not be in the political theory of democracy purveyed by European textbooks.

Mr. Haider and Austria have been vouchsafed a well-established truth. Electoral democracy is not a mere process of the people expressing their will and its being embodied in power, it is one in which sundry organisations mobilise or summon the people to express a specified will that shall culminate in a specific power structure. Should the process yield the wrong result, as it did in Austria, it must be countermanded. Soviet democracy perfected the art as it went through the electoral routine with always just one candidate to a constituency. This ritual puzzled so many in those days, and perhaps it still does. What is the meaning or even purpose of an election without choices? But the function of elections in the Soviet Union was to consolidate the Union (or nation) and the state under the Communist Party, not to fragment them. If the people were obstreperous enough to go beyond the per-

# It is anti-Haider all over Europe

By Batuk Gathani

**BRUSSELS, FEB. 21.** The 'Joerg Haider' factor on pan-European scene refuses to fade away as is seen in the fast escalating anti-xenophobic demonstrations in major E.U. cities such as Vienna, Brussels, Paris, Grenoble, Lyon, Strasbourg, London, some German and Dutch cities on Sunday. Smaller demonstrations also took place as far away as Oslo in North Europe and Belgrade in Southern Europe.

In the Sunday protest rally in Vienna itself, flags were waved denouncing racism while speakers emphasised that 'Europe needs us and we need Europe.' The rally ended in the historic Heldenplatz or Heros' Square, where Adolf Hitler addressed a massive rally after invading and merging Austria with Nazi Germany in 1938.

The protest movement organisers have now called for 'regular' demonstrations until the Austrian Chancellor, Mr. Schuessel, 'steps down'. Anti-government rallies have become a daily occurrence in Austria since the new Government came to power on February 4 when Mr. Schuessel structured the controversial and far right coalition of his conservative Peoples' Party and Mr. Haider's Freedom Party. The later is suspected of promoting xenophobic and racist agenda.

On Sunday, the German Chancellor, Mr. Schroeder, described the advent of the Freedom Party as 'undemocratic' and said Germany had to be vigilant to prevent the rise of similar politician at home.

Observers note that Mr. Schroeder had stopped short of calling Mr. Haider a neo-fascist, but described him as a 'rightist populist'. He criticised Mr. Haider's recent tirade against so-called 'foreigners' and pro-Nazi sentiments. Mr. Haider now claims all this was a case of 'bad judgment' on his part and that he is neither a racist nor a fascist.

Many Austrians feel deeply hurt and embarrassed by what they call 'over reaction' of European liberals to what they regard as essentially a domestic matter. The other day, both Mr. Haider and Mr. Schuessel took out full-page advertisements in the European press to reiterate their democratic and non-racial credentials.

The anti-government speakers

at the rally also said the new Austrian coalition government was elected democratically but lacked 'moral legitimacy' since the Austrian voters did not realise that they were supporting Mr. Haider when they voted for the 'People's Party' in general elections in October.

At that time, an alliance between the People's Party and the Freedom Party was not on cards. Mr. Haider was then rated a mere loner with lot of nuisance value. But the reality is that one in four Austrians voted for Mr. Haider's party and what is more embarrassing is that findings of current opinion polls would suggest that if another general election is held today one in three voters would back him. This would enable him to fulfil his life's ambition of becoming the Chancellor.

The Austrian government's opponents have been encouraged by international support as the U.S., the E.U. and Israel have taken symbolic measures to isolate Austria. The demonstrations in Austria and other European cities are mainly attended by students, human right activists, artists, church groups, trade unionists and recent immigrants — mainly from the Balkans and the East European countries.

The E.U. has adopted a 'no dialogue' stance with the new Austrian government as the Austrian Ministers are generally ignored in European fora.

In some quarters, it is argued that such a tough stance against a fellow E.U. member may trigger a popular backlash in Austria against its membership of the E.U. A major problem for the 14 European democracies is how to cope and react when groups or parties inimical to democratic values of the European society come to power through democratic means.

Largely, the E.U. is also seen haunted by memories and trauma of neo-fascist and Nazi rule five decades ago, amid the realisation that tiny Austria is not pre-war Germany and Mr. Haider neither has the fury nor the oratory of Adolf Hitler. At best, he is a sleek operator who is widely regarded as a savvy political opportunist blessed with good looks and telegenic personality and a controversial demagogue with lot of nuisance-value.

# Haider touches a raw nerve

By Thomas Abraham

HPD-16

LONDON, FEB. 22. Imitation might be the sincerest form of flattery, but the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, is neither flattered nor amused. The Austrian right wing leader, Mr. Joerg Haider, seen throughout Europe as a right wing xenophobe appears to be ardently wooing the British Prime Minister.

Mr. Haider is convinced that he is nothing more harmful than a central European version of Mr. Blair, and in an article published in the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper today declared there were 'amazing similarities' between himself and the British Prime Minister.

Mr. Blair, who sees himself as a good liberal politician of the centre left, is clearly irritated by the comparison and is doing his best to distance himself from Mr. Haider's unwelcome attentions. A Downing Street spokesman sniffily dismissed Mr. Haider's overtures, and said "the idea that there are genuine similarities between the two is so risible that I don't think it is worth wasting our breath."

Mr. Haider however is not easily rebuffed, and he has used Mr. Blair's own 'new Labour' language to illustrate the supposed closeness between the two. In the newspaper article, Mr. Haider says that both he and Mr. Blair were free of the 'ideological ballast' of left and right. Normally, Mr. Blair is proud to acknowledge that he freed the Labour party from its ideological roots, and sees himself as a pragmatic

politician with no real ideology. But when Mr. Haider draws this comparison, it clearly hurts.

Mr. Haider says that like Mr. Blair, he too wants to reform the welfare state. "Both parties want to escape from the rigidity of the welfare state without creating social injustice. They want a fair chance for more self sufficient citizens to develop their real potential instead of state hand-outs which can only perpetuate the poverty trap," Mr. Haider wrote.

Unfortunately for Mr. Blair, that sentence could have come out of a Labour party document. Mr. Haider says that his Freedom Party, "like Labour, stands for equal opportunity, fairness, responsibility and trust."

In what is perhaps the unkindest cut of all, Mr. Haider takes a dig at the British Government's desire to cut down on refugees and asylum seekers, and says that his party "is arguable less tough on asylum seekers and immigrants than Labour and Blair." In a parting shot, he adds "If Blair is not extreme, then nor is Haider."

There are clearly superficial similarities between the two politicians: both are young, charismatic and determined to overthrow the baggage of the past. The big difference however which Mr. Haider never mentions is that there is one item of baggage which Mr. Blair never carried, and which Mr. Haider appears to be very reluctant to throw out: a sympathy with Nazism. There lies the difference.

THE HINDU

23 FEB 2000

# WAYS OF THE WORLD

must admit to a sense of disquiet when I heard the European Union spokesman on BBC TV, that the reason Austria was being looked upon with suspicion by its EU partners was because the leader of the ultra right wing Jörg Haider's party was a part of Austria's coalition government. Austria is thus considered to have departed from the "European Way" as Mr Haider's party is not considered fit to be in the EU. This was the first time that I had heard the expression the "European Way" and it reminded me of similar events in other geographies.

Life was fairly simple in the old days. Following the end of World War II there emerged what were known as the American Way and the Soviet Way. There also emerged a few other Ways but none of them of any consequence. The bipolar ways lasted for about 40 years until the American Way emerged as the sole arbiter of global business, diplomacy and arms. The state of affairs remained more or less undisturbed, until Malaysia's Mahathir reminded the world that there was indeed yet another way — the Asian Way. In brief, Mahathir declared that democracy, human rights, freedom of speech, etc., as understood by the Western world, needed to be interpreted and practiced in terms of local culture and environment, in the Asian context. In fact, Mahathir was articulating the views of most of the other Asian tigers. Following the economic turmoil in Southeast Asia, the debate on the Asian Way has become temporarily dormant.

The countries of Europe and EU are generally considered to be sober and sedate, compared to their American counterparts, in terms of economic and political aggressiveness. Although left of centre governments came to power in UK, France and Germany, their embracing of free market economic philosophy slipped in almost unnoticed. Tony

ular region or geography. That the American Way is synonymous with a borderless world, at least for the time being, is a generally accepted wisdom. That Mahathir had to stand up to defend the way he rules Malaysia says something about the fragility of democratic order in the Tiger states. China has the longest history and is probably the most consistent practitioner of the Asian Way in its original format. The European Way may be a new definition of an old problem. Even after 50 years, it is difficult for Europeans to forge the scourge of Nazism under Hitler. Haider is the new millennium version of Europe's past horrors. If Haider was an isolated individual in Europe he would have been ignored. But he is not; he is one of the leaders of the Austrian ruling coalition. Austria is not the sole European headache. The rightist and separatist political group in Northern Italy under Umberto Bossi may become a coalition partner in a future Italian government. Then there are increasingly popular right wing parties in France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark and some other European countries. The EU indeed faces a major dilemma. It will be interesting to watch how the scenario unfolds.

In this context developments nearer home acquire a new dimension. Whether it is the rise of the state sponsored *mujahideen* movements or that of the Indian culture police, these ways portend developments of a similar pattern.

Seen together, it suggests that when the cyber-world is supposed to usher a new social order, the very threat of the new order is giving birth to new insecure tribes, seeking to tear apart people and societies. Haider does not emerge unless he represents the unrealised aspirations of a significant number of constituents. And that is where the danger lies for every country and in every continent. The end play is yet to unfold. But the portends are not very comfortable.

BY ASHOK GANGULY



Jörg Haider

Blair best represented what was happening in Europe when he ushered in the New Labour to power in the UK. So the public expression of the European Way represents a milestone of sorts. For the "time being, the only signal is that the European Way has had to be defined, in order to meet the perceived threat to the European order by Haider's extreme right wing politics. The concept of the European Way is still somewhat vague, except that it aims to exclude even duly elected politicians in European nation states belonging to the extreme right, from the high table of the European Union."

A particular way is not important unless it is likely to create a lasting impact in a partic-

THE ASIAN AGE

25 FEB 2000

# Haider's sinister roots

**J**erusalem: Anyone who seeks the roots of Jörg Haider's ideas in the Nazi era is wrong. The roots go much deeper and are, in a way, much more sinister.

Anyone who wants to understand the origins and texture of the Haider phenomenon should go back to 1895-1897. Then the basically liberal, multiethnic and tolerant (albeit already decrepit) structure of the Habsburg monarchy was challenged by the emergence of a populist, xenophobic and racist Viennese politician named Karl Lueger.

At the time, Vienna was the height of rapid economic and industrial development that drew to the mainly German-speaking metropolis hundreds of thousands of migrants from the non-Germanic parts of the empire — Czechs from Bohemia, Slovaks from upper Hungary, Jews from Galicia and Bukowina.

Many in the ethnic German majority in Vienna felt overwhelmed and threatened. That these migrants were not technically foreigners was irrelevant. Not being ethnic Germans, they were culturally and linguistically different.

Lueger was a local Viennese politician who started as a radical democrat, standing up for the "little man" against state bureaucracy and corruption. A dashing charmer (known as "der Schöne Karl") and a good public speak-

er, he soon took an anti-foreign line against Czechs and other Slavs and against the Jews.

He promised voters in Vienna municipal elections to keep as many foreigners out as possible, to make it hard for Czech migrants to get city social benefits and to stop teaching Czech in schools. Vienna would remain "ours."

On this platform he won the municipal elections in 1895. The ageing and liberal Emperor Franz Joseph declined to give the required imperial assent to his installation as mayor. Lueger went on to win elections, and the emperor repeatedly refused to yield until finally, in 1897, he bowed to the "will of the peo-

**Mr Haider's language comes straight from Karl Lueger's defence of 'our people' against the eastern strangers. Other Viennese ideologues of the same period contributed to this racist brew... (like) Georg von Schönerer, self-styled Führer of the Pan-German Movement**

BY SHLOMO AVINERI

ple," and Lueger became mayor. During the days between Lueger's election and his inauguration as mayor, a liberal Jewish journalist on the staff of the Neue Freie Presse wrote in his diary a "new St. Bartholomew's Night" threatened to descend on Europe. Fellow liberals thought he was exaggerating.

The journalist's name was Theodor Herzl. In 1896, in the shadow of Lueger's campaign and election, he wrote his pamphlet *Der Judenstaat*. The next year, he convened the first Zionist Congress, in Basel. After all, a Vienna, a Europe democratically electing to power a racist and xenophobic politician would be a dangerous place for Jews to



Karl Lueger

live. Mr Haider's language comes straight from Karl Lueger's defence of "our people" against the threatening eastern strangers. Other Viennese ideologues of the same period contributed to this racist brew — in particular, Georg von Schönerer, self-styled Führer of the Pan-German Movement; Guido von List and Lanz von Liebenfels, who introduced the swastika as the symbol of so-called Aryan superiority.

It was to this Vienna that a young art student came in 1907 from provincial Linz. Adolf Hitler's ideas of Aryan superiority, distaste for Czechs, Slavs in general and Jews, all came from the Viennese ambience of that period, as did his solicitude for the Sudeten Germans. It is eerie that Mr Haider's first statement after the formation of the present government in Vienna alleged the right of Sudeten Germans to compensation.

Few foreigners today notice that a stretch of the magnificent Ringstrasse in Vienna is called Dr Karl Lueger Ring. Austrians notice.

SHLOMO AVINERI is director of the Institute for European Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. By arrangement with the International Herald Tribune

# There is more to Ireland than Guinness

By Thomas Abraham

**DUBLIN, FEB. 28.** Until the Eighties, it seemed as though Ireland was in danger of vanishing. Not the island itself, which remains firmly rooted on the western edge of Europe, but rather its people.

For hundreds of years, the Irish fled their beautiful but poor land to seek their fortunes overseas. From writers like James Joyce to labourers, the Irish emigrated in search of new horizons and better opportunities. But in an indication of how Ireland has been transformed over the past few years — from a poor agricultural nation to a dynamic, fast growing export oriented economy — the Irish are returning home. Officials here say that for the first time in over 150 years, there is now net immigration into Ireland, reversing the historical pattern of mass emigration.

The capital, Dublin, is rapidly changing from a sleepy, provincial town where the tallest architectural features were the steeples of churches and cathedrals, to a classic boom city of gleaming glass office buildings and seemingly endless construction work. The Irish economy has grown at over eight per cent over the last five years, the fastest in western Europe and there are no signs of any slowing down. The per capita GNP, in what was one of Europe's poorest regions, is now close to the European average. There is quiet satisfaction that per capita wealth in Ireland is now nearly as high as Britain, which has traditionally looked on Ireland as a poor cousin.

The Celtic boom has been built on exporting high-value goods, primarily computer software, pharmaceuticals and electronics and al-

so by turning Dublin into an international centre for financial services institutions like banks and insurance companies. Eighty per cent of what the Irish economy produces is exported, making Ireland the third most export-dependent country in the world, after Singapore and Luxembourg. The presence of a well-educated, English-speaking work force, relatively low-wage rates and a business-friendly environment with a corporate tax rate of just 10 per cent, has attracted huge foreign investment, particularly from the U.S. Computer giants like Dell and Intel have all set up manufacturing centres in Ireland. The world's

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top five personal computer manufacturers have bases in Ireland. Ireland has also become the world's second largest software exporter after the U.S.

The transformation of the Irish economy started with its abandonment of a closed economy in the Sixties to join the European Community. This gave the Emerald Isle access to both European funds for development as well as access to a large market. The presence of an extremely well-educated population also helped.

Ireland now faces the problem of not having enough skilled manpower to fuel its economic boom. With a population of only around 3.5 million, Ireland will need to attract workers from all over the world to keep its economy growing. "We estimate we will need to attract 200,000 people from abroad over the next six

years," the Deputy Prime Minister, Ms. Mary Harney, told a group of visiting journalists recently. The need for skilled labour has been met to a large extent by Irish expatriates returning to the country. But this flow is unlikely to be enough to fuel the demand for labour and Ireland is planning to attract immigrants from further afield. "Forty per cent of the work force we need will be met by the returning Irish, but the rest will have to come from elsewhere," said Ms. Harney, who is putting together a new immigration policy for the Government. Among the beneficiaries of the Irish boom have been Indian software engineers who have begun to trickle into the country. "I recently approved work permits for 30 or 40 Indian software people," the Deputy Prime Minister said.

The growth of non-Irish immigrants could cause strains in what is essentially a small homogenous country. "The Irish have never been comfortable with difference or change though on an individual level they are very hospitable to outsiders once they get to know them," she said. The shortage of labour has been aggravated by an acute shortage of housing in Dublin, leading many commentators to suggest that growth should be slowed down until the infrastructure is improved. "We will have a labour force that can cope with a five per cent rate of growth, but not six to seven per cent," said Mr John Fitzgerald of the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin. But as of now, with global markets booming and investment continuing to pour in, there is no sign of the Irish economic miracle slowing down.

Europe **AUSTRIA / SOCIAL DEMOCRATS GIVE UP PLANS**

# Haider factor worries Europeans

By Batuk Gathani

BRUSSELS, JAN. 28. The Austrian rightists are nearer to forming a coalition government, as the Social Democrats have now abandoned the efforts to form one, clearing way for a centre-right coalition of conservatives and the far-right Freedom Party to come to power.

The prospect of the Freedom Party joining the government has triggered a storm in major European Union capitals because of its leader, Mr. Joerg Haider's extreme rightwing and racist record and agenda. Hence, Mr. Haider may not directly participate in the proposed government. The coalition would be led by Mr. Wolfgang Schuessel of the People's Party. It could be installed early next week.

The mounting criticism in the major E.U. capitals continues unabated while Israel has warned that it will cut off diplomatic ties with Austria and close its mission in Vienna.

The French Foreign Minister said that Austria would find itself in a 'new deplorable' state and the German Chancellor, Mr. Schroeder, said in a television interview that while respecting the sovereignty of Austria, he shared the E.U.'s concern over Mr. Haider's rightwing views.

The Prime Minister of Sweden, Mr. Goran Persson, who is hosting the current 'holocaust confer-



The Austrian Foreign Minister and head of the People's Party, Mr. Wolfgang Schuessel (right), with the head of the rightwing Freedom Party, Mr. Joerg Haider, in Vienna. — AP

ence' in Sweden, said the Freedom Party's views were not in line with the E.U.'s shared principles of human rights and tolerance.

In Austria itself, the move which highlights an epoch-making change in the last three decades has been greeted with stoic calm verging on cynical callousness. Mr. Haider has gained international notoriety by propagating anti-foreigner policies and turning a blind eye to the Nazi Germany's racist crimes and pogroms. He is a shrewd politic-

ian with a telegenic appeal. He is also a pragmatist and is aware of the controversy his presence in the Austrian coalition would trigger. Hence, he vowed not to personally join the new government.

Austria is a member of the E.U. and it has put new strains on Austrian society which is struggling to cope with liberalising forces and the E.U.'s agenda of more transparency and accountability.

Austria is one of the most successful and peaceful countries in Europe, but due to the massive influx of foreign refugees from the

Balkans and Eastern Europe during the Nineties, it is seen passing through a fresh bout of social and political hiccups. Mr. Haider's party has dexterously cashed on the racist sentiments.

Among the Western Europe's growing number of rightwing and racist politicians, Mr. Haider, who overtly pursues anti-immigration and anti-E.U. agenda, has a high profile on the domestic front. The agenda has special appeal in Austria which has stagnant but high unemployment rate — average over 11 per cent. In early 1990s, Mr. Haider triggered controversy by overtly praising Hitler's notorious 'S.S.' wing of the Nazi army. The S.S. was created essentially to liquidate the ethnic minorities in Nazi-ruled Europe, and also keep a watchful eye on the rank and file of the military and civilian personnel of the Nazi establishment.

In the last Austrian general elections, the Freedom Party emerged as the second largest and one in five Austrians voted for it. Mr. Haider is a complex and confused politician and has changed his mind on key issues. He is rated as a demagogue who follows politics of expediency. His anti-Europe appeal had the support of the recession-hit middle class businessmen and the anti-immigration rhetoric has a special appeal for the extreme right racist factions in the Austrian society.

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# I will put critics to shame: Haider

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VIENNA, JAN. 29. Despite growing concern abroad about the prospect of his far-right party joining the Austrian Government, the Freedom Party chief, Mr. Joerg Haider, has declared that he would put all his foreign critics to shame.

The European Union warned Austria against setting up a government that includes the Freedom Party, while Belgium was calling for common E.U. action if such a coalition materialises.

The E.U.'s umbrella Christian Democrat European People's Party (EPP) was mulling disciplinary action against Austria's People's Party if it joins forces with Mr. Haider's group. "That is the big question when I look at Haider's views," said Mr. Wilfried Martens, the EPP Chairman. "Several

member parties <sup>are</sup> insisting on discussions and sanctions." Mr. Haider is known for once praising Adolf Hitler's "orderly employment policy" and for later lauding veterans of the Waffen SS as "decent people of good character." He has been apologising ever since. Talking to mediapersons in Klagenfurt, capital of Carinthia province where he is Governor, Mr. Haider said yesterday, "I am not especially surprised that pressure is exerted abroad against inclusion of my party in a future government".

Despite shock and dismay abroad at the prospect of Mr. Haider's people in an E.U. country's Government, the right-wing populist played down the criticism and said his party would seek to make "all those feel

ashamed who confront us (Freedom Party) with prejudices."

In a newspaper interview yesterday, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Wolfgang Schuessel, who heads the People's Party, said, "I accept the concerns" abroad about a participation of the Freedom Party in a new government, but he added, "we won't allow (outsiders) to interfere."

Reflecting widespread sentiment abroad, the Prime Minister, Mr. Antonio Guterres of Portugal, which holds the E.U. presidency, expressed "deep concern" over "the possible political evolution in Austria," stressing the 15 member states were part of "a union based on set values and rules and on a common civilization."

"All E.U. members states' Governments should clearly share

those values and rules, and that common civilization," a brief statement released in Lisbon said.

- AP

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# The peace is broken *Europe*

**L**AST SUNDAY, central Madrid was black with people. It was a grim, silent procession, at once sorrowful and angry, a million strong, moving slowly from the Plaza Colon to the Puerta del Sol. The silence said it all. "Basta ya". That's enough. Enough spilling of innocent blood.

Madrid had not seen such an overwhelming show of popular anger, bitterness, frustration and indignation since the demonstrations against the killing of a young municipal officer, Miguel Angel Blanco, in July 1997. Last Sunday, the Spanish capital was protesting the assassination of Lt. Col Pedro Antonio Blanco Garcia, the 47-year-old father of two who was blown up in a car bomb explosion on January 23.

Breaking its 14-month-old, self-imposed ceasefire, Euzkadi Ta Az-

*After 14 months of peace, the Basque separatists have struck again in Spain. And, reports VAJU NARAVANE, the people are angry.*

and writers. It was as if all of Spain had agreed to make common cause against violence, to protect their young democracy and Constitution.

In the Basque country, however, there were both pro and anti-ETA demonstrations. In Pamplona, for example, 10,000 demonstrators called for the release of ETA prisoners. And the leaders of the two radical nationalist parties, Herri Batasuna (HB or the political wing of the ETA) and Euskal Herritarok (EH), maintained a sullen silence when asked to condemn the killing.

que country, of tolerating pro-ETA radicals.

In the Basque province of Navarre, the Interior Minister, Mr. Jaime Mayor Oreja, turned on Mr. Xabier Arzalluz, who leads the PNV, growling: "How many more deaths will it take for you to snap ties with the radical separatists (EH, HB)?" Mr. Arzalluz snarled back: "And how many more deaths will it take for the Government to finally act?"

The ETA made its ceasefire announcement on September 16, 1998, partly because it was exhausted and needed to buy time

gave him just four days to feel smug before striking hard, in the centre of Madrid.

The unresolved Basque question is bound to create problems for Mr. Aznar. His Government has been utterly inflexible in dealing with nationalists and radicals. After the Zurich meeting between the Government and the ETA failed last May, Mr. Josep Piqui, Government spokesman, said: "The only answer the Spanish State will give ETA is to stop the bombings and arrest the perpetrators. ETA must understand that it will not attain its objectives through violence."

The Basque nationalist coalition Government in the three Basque provinces led by the PNV (moderate nationalist) is going to have to make some difficult choices. Mr. Juan Jose Ibarretxe who heads the Basque autonomous Government has already announced the "suspension" of agreements signed between the PNV and the radical HB-EH formation last May. The political wing of the ETA has still to make an unequivocal condemnation of the blast which killed Lt. Col. Garcia ten days ago. Its failure to do so could threaten the survival of the coalition and could reshuffle the balance of political power in the Basque region.

In the meanwhile, residents of Bilbao, San Sebastian and other major Basque towns are expressing anger at the Government's failure to seize the opportunity offered by the 14-month ceasefire, the longest in the history of the 35-year-old Basque separatist struggle. "I had forgotten what fear felt like — that split second's hesitation before entering a cafe of a bus station which had become second nature to me," said Mr. Miguel Santiago, a teacher.

During the 14-month ceasefire, the Basque country made significant economic gains, especially in tourism. Now tour groups are cancelling hotel bookings and bankers fear that capital which had begun to creep back into the province will once again flee. "The fear is palpable, tangible. You could cut it with a knife. When my sons go to school each morning I see them leave with a knot of fear in my stomach ..." Maria, wife of a senior official, trails off.

But increasingly the population is showing its anger and indignation, even in the Basque country. Says Mr. Xabier Elso, sociologist: "In fact nothing has changed. The fissure dividing Basque 'nationalists' and 'non-nationalists' has grown even wider. Until Herri Batasuna, political wing of the ETA rids itself of the terrorists' stranglehold, nothing will change."/>



Spain's top politicians lead a rally in Madrid against the killing of an army officer by Basque separatists ... protests for peace.

katasuna (ETA), the Basque separatist organisation, had struck again.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Jose Maria Aznar, and Mr. Joachin Almunia, his Socialist political rival in the parliamentary elections scheduled for March 12, marched behind a huge banner proclaiming "For peace and liberty. Terrorism, no!" By common consent the two men had decided to set aside their differences to denounce terrorism. At their side were politicians of every hue, trade unionists, prominent artists

With legislative elections just six weeks away the political climate has suddenly become tense with accusations flying in all directions. Spain has been holding its breath, waiting for the ETA to strike ever since the separatist organisation announced it was ending its unilateral ceasefire as of December 3. Mr. Aznar's right wing Popular Party as well as his coalition Government have come in for some strong criticism. Mr. Aznar's party has accused one of its supporters, the moderate Basque PNV party which heads the regional government in the Bas-

to re-group and partly because it felt it could wrest political concessions from Mr. Aznar's Government for a "nationalist Basque project". But only one of the planned meetings took place between the Government and the ETA, last May in Zurich, and it ended in failure.

Terrorist violence and the Government's obvious inability to forge a way forward could seriously damage the Popular Party's electoral chances. Ironically, Mr. Aznar was utterly confident of a win when he announced the election date on January 17. The ETA