

British coup d'état in European Commission

by Jacques Cheminade

With former Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi as the new president of the European Commission (EC), Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair has managed to firmly install his own men in the European Union Commission's home base in Brussels, which is starting to look like an annex of the British Foreign Office. The administrative reshuffle carried out by Prodi and Neil Kinnock, the British vice chairman of the Commission on Internal Reform, has been to the sole advantage of London, against French and German interests.

"Out of 120 positions, 17 were given to the British, and in 8 cases, these are very prominent positions," wrote *La Stampa* of Turin, Italy. For Spain's *El País*, "In this way, Romano Prodi has paid the debt he owed to his Third Way accomplice, Tony Blair, who helped him rise to the top of the Commission. Prodi has established two categories of Europeans: On the one side, the aristocrats—the British and those who speak the language of the Empire—and on the other side, the pariahs."

Aristocrats? Empire? What Prodi the Anglophile dreams of, is an imperial conception of the world. Speaking at the European Parliament on Oct. 17, he stated, "For the first time since the fall of the Roman Empire, we have the opportunity to reunite Europe, not by force or arms, but on the basis of shared ideals and common rules." As if the Roman Empire—or its British counterpart—were based on "shared ideals and common rules"!

Dividing the spoils

Let's take a look at how leading positions in the EC's Brussels bureaucracy have been distributed.

On the level of General Directors (GDs) and Deputy General Directors, each country has had, since 1958, a more or less equal share. Now, the British are over-represented, with seven GDs, whereas Germany has four, Spain one, and Italy and Portugal none. France maintains six, but cannot boast of running any really essential service. France has lost the Agriculture section, which it had held since the inception of the European Community, as well as the Definition of the Strategy of Enlargement section, and some say it will even lose the Budget and Judicial Services section. Overall, two-thirds of the positions go to northern European countries.

As for the cabinet heads and deputy cabinet heads, the British managed to get eight positions (three cabinet heads

and five deputies), as against three for France (one cabinet head and two deputies), and four for Germany. Even more telling, the French have been ousted from several important cabinet positions. Kinnock and former Governor of Hong Kong Chris Patten, Commissioner for Foreign Relations, have no Frenchmen on their staffs, whereas the two French commissioners, Pascal Lamy (Foreign Commerce) and Michel Barnier (Regional Aid), each appointed a British deputy secretary.

Prodi's spokesman is Ricardo Levi—"Call me Ricky," he says in English. Kinnock was opposed to the nomination of a Frenchman as deputy spokesman, choosing, instead, a Brit. The press room was reorganized on the bidding of Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's spokesman, who was sent to Brussels during the bombing of Kosovo to "toughen" NATO's explanations to the public.

In France, spokesmen for the Presidency, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Foreign Affairs Ministry all say that they are "satisfied." Some French officials are even starting to speak English as a matter of course, such as Christian Noyer, vice president of the European Central Bank and former director of the Treasury, who chose to speak English at a hearing of the Monetary Affairs Commission of the European Parliament, even though simultaneous translation was available into the 11 languages of the European Union.

The banner headline of the French newspaper *Libération*, which one could hardly accuse of being anti-English, proudly bore the headline "God Save the European Commission" (in English!).

The new Anglophilia goes along with defense of British economic policies from these circles. The vice president of the EC, also European Commissioner for Transport, Loyola de Palacio, affirms that "there is no link between liberalization and the Paddington accident"—the tragic rail crash in London. Without batting an eyelash, Palacio extends the argument: "Only by opening up to competition can we ensure an improved quality of service and restore the railroads to the place they deserve. . . . Nothing in the Union's treaty says air traffic control must remain a public service."

In sum, the Europe being built today in Brussels, is not only bad for the member nation-states, it is cut off from the citizens who identify less and less with that "institution, which claims to govern them without knowing anything about them," as *Libération's* Brussels correspondent puts it.

This evolution is deliberate: a Roman-type empire—and on this point we should take Prodi literally—is an immense bureaucracy controlled from the top, manipulating public opinion while destroying the very institution of a republican nation-state.

European patriots must put a stop to this, restarting the motor of the French-German alliance, in the interest of all peoples; otherwise, Europe will be held on a British leash, plundered and then plunged into chaos—just like a province of a dying empire.