

Forward in Europe

Cumbria and North Lancashire
affiliated to the European Movement

Newsletter

Summer 2009

The Defence of Europe's Cultural Heritage: The Role of *Europa Nostra*

A large and appreciative audience came together on 7 July in the splendidly designed Ambleside Parish Centre to listen to a highly illuminating and thought-provoking presentation by the Secretary-General of **Europa Nostra**, Mme Sneska Quaedvlieg-Mihailovic. The Lake District setting, in the speaker's own words, 'this gem of Europe's cultural and natural heritage', underlined her crusading message: that by raising public awareness of Europe's shared cultural inheritance, its 'unity in diversity', we can make a real contribution to the building of Europe.

Indeed, reflecting upon the evening's discussion leads one to a further conclusion, that in constructing their version of Europe, politicians and bureaucrats have consistently erred in putting the political and economic cart before the cultural horse. For all the nations of Europe can take pride in the development of their own particular historical and cultural identity without interpreting their shared origins as a necessary preliminary to federalism, and without having to claim some sort of national hegemony for themselves. Had that essential building block been firmly in place the political and economic superstructure would not have provoked the jingoistic nonsense with which we are all too familiar.

That is why the work of **Europa Nostra** is so important and deserves our wholehearted support. There have been

earlier efforts to persuade, in particular the youth of Europe, that their inheritance is pan-European as well as national. In 1991 the Council of Europe, influenced by the European Ministers of Education, decided to commission a book which would help to establish the European dimension in School curricula across the continent; thereby acknowledging, in the words of Maitland Stobbart, the Council's then Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport, 'the vital role of education in bringing the peoples of our continent closer together and creating a sense of "being at home in Europe".' That book, *Teaching about Europe*, written by Margaret Shennan, was well-received in this country and across the continent. But whereas in Spain it has been translated as recently as 2005 into both Spanish and Basque it has virtually ceased to have any influence on our National School curriculum.

Currently **Europa Nostra** remains our best hope of persuading Europeans that they share an inheritance and are not divided by it.

J.H.Shennan

Recent Events

In January 2009 we welcomed Benedict Southworth, the Director of the World Development Movement and former Director of Amnesty International, to a meeting at the Westmorland Hotel. (Tebay Service Station on the M6). In a stimulating and wide-ranging talk he criticised EU policies towards developing countries. Although acknowledging that the European Union contributes more than half the aid received by the developing world he maintained that its opposition to the principle of nations protecting infant industries has encouraged an uneven form of specialisation, allowing the developed nations of Europe to dominate

manufacturing, high-tech, high value activities, leaving the developing world to provide the raw materials.

The Director regretted the fact that to a large extent EU policy has been captured by well-organised business lobbyists, operating out of sight and exclusively representing large multinational enterprises. All in all, his was a cautionary tale, emphasising the contrast between the rhetoric of the European Trade Commissioner and the low level of aid which does little to reduce poverty in less developed nations.

Contributions from members

A Possible Future for the EU

Luckshan Abeysuryia

Fifty one years ago, under the direction of great Europeans like Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, the six State European Common Market came into existence. From that modest beginning, the European Union of 27 Member States has now emerged and plays a leading international role.

With the crucial co-operation of Germany and France, Western Europe has become increasingly stable. But in many parts of East and South Europe, ethnic nationalism and right wing dogma are a threat to European harmony. This is not so much of a problem in the Czech Republic & Greece.

I therefore firmly believe that the process of further enlargement of the EU to the West Balkans and Turkey is now overdue.

Progress is being made with accession and partnership programmes in Croatia, Turkey, Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Serbia and Albania; but in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro & Kosovo, there remains much to be done.

By about 2020 at the latest, I foresee an EU of 35 states underpinning the prosperity, human rights and security of European citizens from the Carpathians to the Urals. I also envisage further increasing cooperation with the 6 Caspian countries to secure Europe's energy needs.

Of course, such an enlarged EU would bring new stresses and strains on institutions and on governance procedures, but they would be far outweighed by the benefits of greater stability and prosperity provided by the group of 35.

Future Meetings

The European Union – How it really works:

**The relationship between the Council, the Commission and the Parliament.
Speaker: Nikolaus van der Pas**

The Queens Hall, Sedbergh School
Thursday 17th September
6.30pm buffet meal £12.00
7.30pm meeting

Apply Mary Wane Tel: 015394 44484

Meeting planned in November with a Nordic flavour.

Articles appearing in this edition do not necessarily represent the view of the committee.