



The Slow Death of Europe

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What can you expect of French politicians? Surrender. They did it 66 years ago when German armies invaded France. They did it again three years ago when it became obvious it was necessary to topple Saddam Hussein's rogue regime. They did it once more in the first days of April, this year. No army was involved this time: just rioters and strikers. But that was enough. Surrender is a habit deeply engrained in the French political character.

The next presidential election in France takes place one year from now, and it's clear now that the two main candidates will be a socialist and a socialist. The socialist of the center, de Villepin, is out of the picture. The "right wing" socialist will be Nicolas Sarkozy who was toying with a hard line until a few weeks ago, when he became a covert to "social justice." There is a good

chance the left wing socialist will be Segolène Royal, the woman who understood the best way to be a socialist candidate in France is to have no ideas and to display this proudly: she has opened a website where all those who would like to vote for her will write their ideas which, in the end, will become hers.

The French are lucky indeed: in 2002, they had to choose between a fascist and a crook. They chose the crook. This time: no fascist, no crook, just two socialist airheads.

In fact, the country is crumbling. It will keep crumbling until the election and it will crumble even more after the election. Everybody thinks there will be more riots. Everybody knows there will be more radical Muslims. I now see groups of women completely veiled in the streets, looking like dark ghosts. At the red light in Paris, you have more and

and more beggars. Most of them are missing a leg, an arm. Some have just had their hand cut off, and they show you their arm ending in a stub to inspire a sense of horror and pity. On the side of the highways, just outside the big cities, small shantytowns have started to appear.

If it was only France, you could think the country is a kind of black hole, but the problem is continent-wide (or at least the western part.) Elsewhere in Europe, you do not have riots, but you have the same sensation of watching a low motion disaster that nobody can stop. Unemployment is everywhere, Great Britain and Ireland excepted. The number of poor and beggars is rising everywhere, as is the number of radical Muslims. The mediocrity of politicians is almost the same in every country. People in the street look sad and have the sensation of being faced with only a grim future.

That future can be seen in Italy. Berlusconi at least put the economy back on track; it's certain Prodi will do absolutely nothing at the head of a coalition that includes communists and centrists, with a program that encompassing three hundred pages of sinister platitudes. The people who voted for it voted against change. They know who Prodi is, a mediocre bureaucratic professor, will give it to him. Many people in Prodi's coalition are useful idiots, ideologues, or just plain anti-Americans and anti-Israelis.

It took al-Qaeda bomb attacks in

Madrid to push the Spanish people to vote out an ally of the United States and the father of Spain's economic revival while handing power to a leftist with a dhimmi mentality. It took nothing to push the Italians in the same direction. If you add to all this the situation you have in Germany where Angela Merkel is at the head of a large coalition mixing the center left and the center right, without any possibility of finding viable alternatives, you can see Tony Blair is very isolated indeed. In fact, a glance at the British press shows how much of a lame duck Blair is, and how immune to his practical ethics are the people who will replace him.

The rhythm is different from one country to another, but the dirge like music is the same. For decades, Europeans dreamed of building a great power. The dream could not have a happy end: it was not based on responsibility, but on dependency. Europeans took advantage of the protection America offered to pump money into their welfare states. From cradle to grave was their promise; and little by little, the graves started outnumbering the cradles. But cynicism accompanied dependence—a malign chemistry. Some European leaders thought they could create a synergy with the Arab world to establish a “counterpower” to the United States. Europe will be more Arab and Muslim, but it will not be a counterpower to anything except its traditional identity.