



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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STORM OVER GERMANY

February 26, 2009 International Herald Tribune reported: "The global financial crisis threatens to strike Germany - and the rest of the European Union - with hurricane-like force in the next three to six months.

As the world's leading exporter and Europe's primary economic engine, Germany is already enduring its worst recession since 1990. And as world trade shrinks and layoffs mount, Germany's downward spiral could further fragment the 27-nation EU. It could also jeopardize Berlin's ability to work more closely with the United States on a common strategic agenda ranging from Afghanistan to the Middle East.

A tectonic political shift is likely to occur with the Sept. 27 national elections. The governing grand coalition, linking Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats with the left-of-center Social Democrats, now seems doomed despite its 75 percent majority in the Parliament.

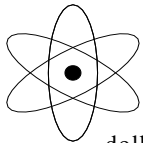
A popular swing to smaller parties could allow Merkel to satisfy her old wish of forming a center-right government with the Free Democrats, who stand to make major gains.

This would normally be seen as good news for American strategic interests, since a CDU-FDP government should be eager to enact greater free-market reforms and generally embrace foreign and security policies that are friendly to the United States. But the gravity of the economic crisis has accelerated a rise in national protectionist sentiment across Europe in ways that are likely to distract Germany from playing a more helpful and decisive role in abetting American interests.

The rancor between Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy is causing a rupture in the Franco-German axis, which is traditionally vital for the EU to function effectively. Merkel and Sarkozy have accused each other of protectionism."..."

RUSSIA TO DEVELOP STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCES DESPITE DEFICIT

February 25, 2009 VOA News reported: "Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov says development of his country's strategic nuclear forces will be the government's top military procurement priority in 2009. Ivanov's statement was made while Russia faces a budget deficit and its defense industry says it is having trouble getting loans due to the global economic crisis.



Addressing lawmakers in the lower house of the Russian Parliament, Sergei Ivanov said Russia's military industrial complex has been considerably less affected by the global economic crisis than the country's civilian industries. The reason, he says, is simple - defense industries are funded by the state budget.

Ivanov notes there has also been no decrease in demand for Russian military exports, adding that the rising value of the U.S. dollar favors his country's defense industry. The senior official says the government will focus on three aspects of military procurement in 2009; purchase of new equipment, research and development, and repair and modernization of existing equipment. Within these expenditures, he says priority will be given to Russia's strategic nuclear forces.

Ivanov says he is being frank so that everyone knows this includes the entire triad of strategic forces - missile defense, navy and air force. He recognizes this priority will be very expensive, but says Russians have no other way but to develop and perfect their strategic nuclear deterrent."..."

SARKOZY CALLS ON EU TO PROTECT OWN INDUSTRY

February 25, 2009 EU Observer reported: "French president Nicolas Sarkozy on Tuesday (24 February) called on the EU to protect its industry in the face of US protectionism, and said France and Italy would insist on this during a meeting of EU leaders in Brussels on Sunday.

"There must be competition, but competition to build big European groups, not to make the totalities of our industries delocalise. France and Italy will as soon as Sunday [at an emergency EU summit] speak with one voice to ask Europe to take decisions, strong decisions," Mr Sarkozy told the press following a meeting with Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi in Rome.

"You know how much I cherish the friendship with the United States, but if the United States defends its farmers as it does, maybe we can do the same in Europe. If the United States defends its industry, as it does - and they are right - maybe in Europe we can do the same," he added.

The French president's comments come as the US earlier this month adopted a \$787 billion (€617 billion) package to boost its economy. The bill contains "Buy American" provisions prohibiting foreign steel companies bidding for US infrastructure contracts financed by the plan. The European Commission has already raised concerns about the clause.

France itself has been accused of protectionism after earlier this month unblocking €6.5 billion for its car industry, and Mr Sarkozy

speaking out against delocalisation of French factories, notably to eastern Europe.

Later on, Spain and Italy also adopted state aid schemes for their ailing car industries, with Germany also considering a bailout of car maker Opel.

The French president defended the moves, arguing that member states were forced to take such measures because of the lack of a common EU policy."..."

LAS VEGAS RUNNING OUT OF WATER MEANS DIMMING LOS ANGELES LIGHTS

February 26, 2009 Bloomberg.com reported: Las Vegas Running Out of Water Means Dimming Los Angeles Lights

On a cloudless December day in the Nevada desert, workers in white hard hats descend into a 30 foot wide shaft next to Lake Mead.

As they've been doing since June, they'll blast and dig straight down into the limestone surrounding the reservoir that supplies 90 percent of Las Vegas's water. In September, when they hit 600 feet, they'll turn and burrow for 3 miles, laying a new pipe as they go.

The crew is in a hurry. They're battling the worst 10-year drought in recorded history along the Colorado River, which feeds the 110-mile-long reservoir. Since 1999, Lake Mead has dropped about 1 percent a year. By 2012, the lake's surface could fall below the existing pipe that delivers 40 percent of the city's water.

As Las Vegas's economy worsens, the workers are also racing against a recession that threatens the ability to sell \$500 million in bonds so they can complete the job."..."

IRAN EYES MEXICO IN DEEPENING LATIN AMERICA TIES

February 26, 2009 The Associated Press reported: "Iran is exploring ways to expand anemic trade with Mexico as part of stepped up efforts to deepen ties with Latin America, a top Iranian diplomat said Thursday. Annual trade between Mexico and Iran is a mere \$50 million, compared to \$2 billion with Brazil, said Ali Reza Salari, Iran's deputy foreign minister for the Americas.

"We are here to investigate, why so low?" Reza Salari told reporters in Mexico City, where he was to meet with diplomats and business leaders. "With Mexico, there is absolutely no political problem between us. No cultural problems. It shows we have many shortcomings in our trade relations."

Iran has a deepening alliance with some leftist-led Latin American countries, based partly on mutual antagonism toward the United States. Housing projects have brought hundreds of Iranian engineers and specialists to Venezuela, and Tehran has opened new embassies in Nicaragua and Bolivia.

Deeper ties with Mexico's U.S.-friendly conservative government would necessarily be more practical in nature. Mexico has been trying to find new markets for its exports in a bid to ease economic reliance on the United States especially since being dragged to the brink of recession by U.S. financial turmoil."..."

U.S. REPORTS FIRST SUICIDE BOMBER

February 26, 2009 The Middle East Newline reported: "The United States has reported its first suicide bomber, a naturalized citizen who returned to his native Somalia and blew himself up for an Al Qaida-aligned group. Officials said Shirwa Ahmed became the first U.S. citizen to blow himself up in a suicide strike. They said Ahmed killed as many as 30 people in a suicide car bombing in northern Somalia in October 2008.

He was returned for burial in the U.S. city of Minneapolis. "A man from Minneapolis became what we believe to be the first U.S. citizen to carry out a terrorist suicide bombing," FBI director Robert Mueller said. "The attack occurred last October in northern Somalia, but it appears that this individual was radicalized in his hometown in Minnesota."..."



U.S. HELPS PALESTINIANS BUILD FORCE FOR SECURITY

February 27, 2009 The International Herald Tribune reported: "They rappel down a 65-foot tower, navigate obstacle courses, shoot in the firing range and sleep in pristine barracks. They eat in an air-conditioned mess where brushed aluminum glints from every kitchen surface. Rows of Land Rovers stand by. The entrance reads "The Presidential Guard, Always in Front: Strength, Sacrifice, Redemption."

One year ago, this 18-acre campus built with \$10 million of American taxpayer money was another piece of Jordan Valley desert, and Palestinian guardsmen slept on flea-bitten mattresses and took meals on their laps. Along with a 35-acre, \$11 million operations camp a few miles away, also American-financed, it is a real step forward in an otherwise moribund process of Palestinian state-building.

"These guys now feel like they're on a winning team, that they are building a Palestinian state," said Lieutenant General Keith Dayton, the American who has been overseeing the training of Palestinian forces, as he watched exercises on Thursday. "And I wouldn't stay if I didn't think they were going to do it. I have complete confidence in the Palestinian leadership, and I'm convinced the new administration is serious about this."..."

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