

Eastern Europe and the democratic deficit

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â€¢ A Group of "Concerned Albanians", has written to all MEPs. Their letter talks of, "Albania at a crossroads....pseudo democrats....tyrants and criminals stifle reform of the political system... corruption....government managed like fiefdoms."

They want national referendums on issues of general interest, but they know political interference would undermine them, so they are calling for the European Parliament for help. They do not seem to understand that the EU does not exactly favour referendums.

Meanwhile, the Albanian government is actively seeking NATO membership. How that will help Albania is open to question but the motive is clear. It would grant respectability to the corrupt political elite while, of course, diverting attention from their country's instability.

That may sound far-fetched, it would have to me, had I not attended the 'Oxford Summit of Leaders' organised by the 'European Business Assembly'. National Government representatives spoke of partnerships with emerging Eastern European countries, but being marched with other speakers into the great hall of Oxford Town Hall to a fanfare by two uniformed trumpeters was, I felt, rather excessive!

The Albanian "Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary", spoke only of Albania joining NATO, as conferring many advantages on his country. It sounded very odd to me, but this was prior to the "concerned Albanians" letter, so it now makes sense.

Incidentally, I was given to believe that the central theme of the day would be trade and I had been invited to speak for 20 minutes. But, at the last minute, the organiser tried to side line me. Only after making representations was I allowed to address the audience.

I informed them that the greatest distortion to trade was the EU and I advised them to raise their eyes above the horizon of just 500 million Europeans and look across the seas to 6000 million people. The organisers did not welcome that. Perhaps, too late, they realised that I was UKIP and that I was going to introduce politics, in spite of their wish for me not to do so.

A few Albanians calling for an end to post-communist corruption is echoed across many former iron curtain countries. In my two visits to Romania I was made painfully aware of their communist legacy and my only regret is that I was unable to help a small democratic party boost their campaign and achieve some electoral success.

This wretched legacy is not just seen in the crumbling concrete of the blocks of flats in Bucharest, or the washing at every window because there is nowhere else to dry it. It is seen in employment where no one gets a job without an influential connection.

Corruption is present at council and government level. The mayor of Ploesti complained that they were getting no EU money to help with restoring the local infrastructure. I suggested that he looks to his MEPs for help, before realising that this is useless; Romanian MEP lists are drawn up centrally. It does not take a genius to guess where the money has gone.

A Romanian MP proudly told me that they now had no state industries, all was privatised. Sounds wonderful until one

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realises that these companies are still run by communists, sorry, "former" communists. One of their biggest resources is oil, with enough potential to be significant exporters from near the centre of Europe. Now, instead of earning them precious foreign exchange they produce little more than their own needs. The "new" owners sold the oil companies off to an Austrian concern, which promptly shut them down. Pockets well and truly lined. Soviet style corruption grips Romania yet.

If these experiences are typical of at least the more eastward of the former iron curtain countries then they are a long way from democracy. The recent cases of incarceration of British people in filthy jails in some of those countries is further evidence of their backwardness.

There is, however, a little light. In some of those countries there are the beginnings of opposition to their undemocratic condition. It is, I believe, one of UKIP's roles to encourage these embryonic democrats to the point when they become known in their own countries and gather support. Moreover, it is to our advantage.

I suggest that one of the reasons why the British public does not support us with their votes, is because they are misled. One of the biggest lies of our political elite is to promote the notion that everyone in Europe welcomes the EU, drawing attention to the queue of applicant countries. With this planted at the back of their minds people therefore draw back from voting UKIP. In spite of polls showing wide agreement with our stance, they don't want to be seen as the odd man out, they don't want to buck the trend or be cast as antagonistic to Europe.

It is our job to dispel that notion and encouraging the small but enlightened minorities of realists in other EU countries will help us to do so. This brief account of rising minorities rejecting the EU, but disadvantaged by corruption, is not confined to Eastern Europe. UKIP MEPs recently met the leader of a German delegation who had just been elected to the Bremen state assembly. Elected, that is, after a successful second election. The courts found that his 1% loss first time round was due to corruption!

This small party is not a league away from UKIP, it promotes the individual sovereign state. Like us they are finding it hard going, but with an added burden. Over two generations on many Germans are still so guilt-ridden about their past that talk of Independence raises the ghosts of history. They have an underlying fear.

We must champion the right of people in a democratic independent state to run their own affairs. We must promote the realism that the EU is a failed, unnatural invention, which is not as widely supported in Europe as the Euro Godfathers make out and whose own EU Barometer showing declining support will help us knock away the props of the Euro fanatic.

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