

World News Briefs

Greek General Strike Timed To Intersect Bankers' Meet

May 14—The major Greek trade union federations have called a general strike for May 20, the very day that the finance ministers and central bank chiefs of the European Union will hold their meeting to enforce their bankers' dictatorship. Both the civil service trade union ADEDY and the private sector union GSEE, which, together, represent half of Greece's 4.4 million workers, have called for the 24-hour general strike to protest the government's draft law on social security, which will cut pensions by more than 15%.

Reflecting the popular outrage at the pension cuts, a political cartoon in the Greek daily *Katherini* pictured a building with elderly people looking out the windows, with a sign on top reading "Retirement Home." Below it are workmen putting up a new sign reading, "Arbeit Macht Frei," the words written above the gate to the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz.

Meanwhile, official unemployment has increased to 12.1%, up from 9% last year, and is expected to increase to more than 14% by the end of the year.

Portuguese Government Goes For Drastic Budget Cuts

May 14—Apparently trying to make Portugal "eligible" for future bailouts by the EU, the Portuguese government announced budget cuts in the range of EU2 billion for the coming fiscal year, by raising taxes on the one hand, and cutting wages of public servants, on the other. EU2 billion is a lot of money for a nation with a population of 10.5 million.

In a move more Draconian than Socratic, Prime Minister José Sócrates said Portugal would impose extraordinary income taxes of up to 1.5%; hike value-added tax

by 1 percentage point to 21%; and raise a 2.5% tax on large companies' profits. The government will also cut the salaries of top-level public sector workers and politicians by 5% in an effort to cut the 2010 budget deficit to 7.3% of GDP, lower than the 8.3% target, or EU14 billion, budgeted for 2010.

Thailand Civil War Looms, As Police Join Red Shirts

May 14—Following the shooting in Bangkok of "Red Shirt" opposition figure Maj. Gen. Kattiya Sawasdiapol by a sniper yesterday, firefights continued throughout the day, with 10 deaths and 125 or more injured, including a Canadian journalist who took three bullets. The Red Shirts, who have occupied the major shopping district in downtown Bangkok since April 3, are now demanding an immediate cease-fire, and that Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva step down immediately.

The government continues to threaten to move in and clear the demonstrators off their barricaded compound, but the army as a whole almost certainly will not follow such an order. At best, the government appears to have some snipers and some army units which are willing to shoot at demonstrators who are challenging them outside the Red Shirt barricades.

The London *Daily Telegraph* headlines from Bangkok that "Police Join Red Shirt Protest," reporting that many police are shooting back at army soldiers. The *Telegraph* also reports that the British Embassy has closed, after a warning that it was an "attack target," noting that the hated Prime Minister Abhisit is "Eton-educated."

London Sweats as Argentina Slams IMF Murder in Europe

May 13—On the eve of the European Union-Ibero America summit in Madrid, scheduled

for May 18, London financier circles are sweating over the repeated attacks by Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner on the IMF austerity being imposed on Greece and Spain.

With Europe's volatility intensifying, the outspoken Argentine President will be attending the Madrid summit, as the Associated Press put it today, "amidst fears that the Greek government . . . will just not be able to push through the draconian measures it has agreed to." And, it warned, "those fears are unlikely to have been eased by comments made by Argentina's President Cristina Fernández, who said earlier this week that the measures 'unfortunately are condemned to failure.'"

Yesterday, Fernández de Kirchner slammed the IMF yet again, charging that austerity prescriptions for Greece and Spain "will have very bad results"—as they did for Argentina in 2001—and warned that the IMF is bailing out the financial system, while "strangling" the real economy. Get rid of the IMF "doctor" and his poisonous "medicine," she demanded—although not posing any alternative to either.

The City of London's anxiety was reflected today in the London *Economist* headline, which fretted that Fernández and her husband, former President Nestor Kirchner, are "Lame Ducks No More."

Uproar in the Balkans Against EU-IMF Brutality

May 13—The crisis—and the mass-strike upsurge against the fascist EU austerity policy—which has exploded in Greece, is now rapidly spreading throughout the Balkans. In Romania, thousands of farmers blocked the area around the government building in Bucharest on May 11, demanding the resignation of all officials from the Agriculture Ministry, because of incompetence. The protesters, who arrived by tractors, which they parked outside the main Cabinet offices, are demanding payment of long-overdue

subsidies for fuel and irrigation water, which the government promised but is withholding, as part of a foul budget-cutting deal with the EU.

Also on May 11, the country's five largest labor unions announced plans for four days of protests outside the government and Presidential building in Bucharest. They are demonstrating against what the unions describe as the "unacceptable measures" hammered out by the government and the IMF. The protests began today.

Thousands of Romanian pensioners rallied yesterday in Bucharest and other cities against the government's planned austerity measures. The biggest of these protest rallies was staged by 1,000 senior citizens in front of the Presidential palace, calling on President Traian Basescu to resign. Hundreds more took to the streets in other large cities such as Iasi, Ploiesti, and Galati, chanting, "You'll bury us alive."

In neighboring Bulgaria, hundreds of students and professors staged a protest on May 11 outside the country's biggest university in Sofia, over cuts in education subsidies.

Medvedev: Russia, Turkey In 'Strategic Partnership'

May 11—The visit to Turkey by Russian President Dmitri Medvedev May 11-12 will include the final agreement to build Turkey's first nuclear power plant, with four 1.2 GW reactors. The plant will be built near the Mediterranean port of Mersin. Turkey's electric power situation is desperate—in 2015, it will have a deficiency of 5 GW before these reactors come on line. When the first agreement was signed, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said that the Russian price to build the Turkish nuclear plant was 50% lower than the U.S. price.

Besides that, "There are a number of priority landmark joint projects in the field: the construction of the South Stream and Blue Stream-2 gas pipelines, and the Samsun-

Ceyhan oil pipeline," Medvedev told Ria Novosti before arriving. Russia is already Turkey's biggest trading partner, and the relations were upgraded in February 2009, "reaching the level of full-scale strategic partnership."

India To Supply Small Reactors to Kazakstan

May 12—During his visit to Kazakstan, India's External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna announced that the two countries are set to sign a civilian nuclear agreement that will involve Indian investments in Kazakstan's mining sector; Kazakstan will supply uranium to India. In addition, India will provide small and medium-size nuclear reactors to the Central Asian nation in the future. Speaking at a joint press conference, Krishna said: "I am confident that an inter-governmental agreement on Civilian Nuclear Energy cooperation will be finalized soon."

Kazakstan is the world's second-largest producer of uranium, after Australia, which has refused to supply uranium to India, saying it cannot supply the strategic mineral to countries that have not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). India presently manufactures 230 MW and 500 MW pressurized heavy water reactors that use natural uranium, and is developing a new line of reactors that will use thorium-232 as the fissionable fuel.

Prior to Krishna's visit, an inter-governmental agreement on civilian nuclear energy had been reached. Ajay Bisaria, Joint Secretary (for Eastern Europe) in India's Ministry of External Affairs, said India envisages cooperation in a complete range of nuclear-related activities, which includes fuel, uranium mining, and construction of nuclear power plants. "A draft has been floated, and we expect further discussions to take place. It may not be signed during the visit, but certainly discussions will take place," Bisaria said.

Briefly

THE UN SECURITY Council Permanent Five issued a statement May 5, to the conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in support of a resolution for a nuclear-free Middle East. It states that the UNSC is "committed to a full implementation of the 1995 NPT resolution on the Middle East," and is "ready to consider all relevant proposals...."

RETIRED INDIAN Ambassador K. Gajendra Singh prominently quoted from Lyndon LaRouche's May 10 statement, "The Brutish Bastards Are at It Again": "Well-known US economist and political activist Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.," Singh wrote, "voiced strong condemnation that the British swine have once again imposed a 1923-style hyperinflationary collapse on modern Germany, with the trillions-dollar bailout scheme imposed on the Euro zone...."

ENVIRONMENTAL bribery, committed by Rothschild agent George Soros, in Jakarta, is pushing the Indonesian government to sequester more of the country's forest and wetlands from development in the name of preventing climate change. "Clearly by protecting the forests and particularly the peat areas, Indonesia has to bear some opportunity costs, and doing it benefits the entire world," Soros threatened.

THE BREAK-UP OF SUDAN would be "a disaster for Africa," declared Chad President Idriss Deby Itno, who warned that "The fragmentation of Sudan will open the door for fragmentation of other African countries." Many African nations fear that the division of Sudan would encourage secessionist sentiments in their own countries.

THE RISE AND FALL of empires was once again the subject of an interview in Germany's *Handelsblatt*, by British imperial sycophant Niall Ferguson, in which he forecast a collapse of the U.S.A. and the Eurozone, in the medium term. He says currencies as we have known them, will disappear, to be replaced by a new currency based on raw materials.