

## **Post-democracy at Work: On Vacation**

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Remember the “European elections“? What a drama! Europe had to be saved, with it the climate, not to mention democracy, social solidarity, human decency in general... It took just a few days for business as usual to return. National governments convened, so did the various “pro-European” groups in the so-called “European Parliament”, to divide the booty between them. (Dividing booty is the highest skill and the most important activity of politicians in a post-democratic democracy.) Everybody had to be brought on board, nationality trumping “political families“, which differ far less, if at all, than the Union’s member states. (“Anti-Europeans” are, of course, excluded; Brussels-style democracy knows no opposition.) All four “presidencies” — Council, Commission, Parliament, Central Bank — dealt out, with just the remaining seats on the Commission to be filled (a ridiculous 26 in number, one for each country — can you imagine a Commission working session?), everybody went on vacation, leaving Europe, the climate, democracy, social solidarity, human decency to themselves and to the likes of Boris Johnson and Matteo Salvini, not to forget Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel.

Remember Jean-Claude Juncker, the first and last *Spitzenkandidat* to be appointed President of the Commission? Already as *Spitzenkandidat* he was a fake, having never been a member of the EP as he spent his political life as Prime Minister of mighty Luxemburg and as a much sought-after tax adviser to firms looking for profitable tax loopholes. His party family having won just 29.5 percent of a vote in which no more than 42.6 percent of the electorate took part, a prominent German philosopher publicly declared it „a slap in the face of democracy“ if Juncker wasn’t appointed President regardless. Has anyone noticed any democratic progress during his five-year tenure? When Merkel and Schäuble finished off Syriza, not a

single word was heard from President Juncker. He had more important contributions to democracy to make. In early 2018 the European Parliament had voted to abolish Daylight Savings Time if the masses demanded it; to find out they were to be consulted. In July and August an internet vote was taken by the Commission. In all but three countries the turnout was below one percent; by far the most votes came from notoriously hypochondriac Germany (a turnout of 3.8 percent; Austria 2.9). No matter, the Commission announced that „84 % want Europe to stop changing the clock“, and Juncker promised to end Daylight Savings Time before the 2019 European elections, as proof of his and the EU’s democratic accountability. The problem was that neither he nor the “Parliament” had the competence to decide this. The issue was handed to the member states to face the real problems: just one time zone for Portugal and Estonia? The latest news is that the new time regime may be in place, if at all, at some point in 2021.

And the winner is...? Perhaps there is one and his name is Macron. Helping Merkel to get rid of her failed defense minister, Ursula von der Leyen, he managed to scrap the *Spitzenkandidat* charade for good. He also has now a staunch ally in Brussels, who will support his call for German defense spending to be almost doubled to two percent of GDP (which will make Germany spend significantly more on „defense“ than Russia, a nuclear power). Moreover, in Berlin von der Leyen is succeeded by Merkel’s – already failing – handpicked successor as CDU party leader, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, in short AKK, an even more faithful supporter of the two percent. Both will do their best to extract Germany from its self-imposed restraint on arms exports — seen unfavorably by France, which wants to merge the French and German arms industries to enter the lucrative international arms market in the big way. AKK will also work hard to curtail, in the name of a shared French-German “strategic culture“, the postwar powers of the German parliament to have the final say on any deployment of German troops abroad. Add to this the promotion of the Frenchwoman, Christine Lagarde, to the Presidency of the European Central Bank, where she will be the first non-

economist politician (which however, given the ways of contemporary economists, may not be much of a loss).

Brexit is approaching, Italy may be on its way out, Greece has been returned into the hands of its old political aristocracy, the European immigration regime is in shambles, so is the treaty on intermediate-range nuclear missiles, the United States are about to station ground groups in Poland, at the Russian border — and the “European Parliament“ is on vacation. Not much damage done, though, as it has nothing to say on anything of significance. Why all this excitement about its election? No need to answer this as hardly anyone remembers the excitement in the first place.