

Publishing Editor's column

FOR STUDENTS of the signs of the times the development of a united Europe since the Second World War has been one of the most exciting features of world events, fulfilling, we believe, Revelation 17. We have seen it grow from a six-nation Common Market to a twenty-five-nation European Union (EU) stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the borders of Russia. Other nations are set to join within a year or two.

Recently we have heard much about a European constitution, an immense document, opinions concerning which vary according to people's view on the matter of growing European union. Supporters of a united Europe tend to present it as just a big tidying-up exercise, incorporating into one document all sorts of legislation that have come into being. Opponents of a united Europe say that its adoption will create a European nation state and a loss of national freedom. Before the new constitution comes into effect, however, each of the twenty-five states of the EU has to agree to adopt it; if one or more countries fail to do so it falls, in theory at least. The process of deciding varies from country to country, with some governments allowing the people to decide in a referendum and others leaving it to their legislative bodies to make the decision. Some countries have already decided in favour.

Following a lot of pressure, the British Government has decided to put the issue to the British people in the form of a referendum. Another country that rather surprisingly chose to do the same is France, one of the founders of the original Common Market and, along with Germany, its central force. In recent months it has become clear that opinion in this supposedly strongly European nation was moving against the constitution, despite widespread political backing within France, and on the morning that I write this the news is that the French people have rejected the constitution by a large margin.

By the time these words are read it is expected that the Dutch will have voted no and that the proposed referendum in Britain will have been abandoned as pointless since the new constitution is already dead.

Is this halt in the growth of European unity a setback to our prophetic expectations? At first it might seem so, but an article by Simon Jenkins in *The Times* of 21 May puts a very different light on things. The article is entitled, "A French yes

vote lets Britain go to plan C—tearing this EU down", and it expresses the view that it would be in Britain's best interests for the French to vote in favour of the constitution so that the British people would have their chance to reject the constitution in a referendum. Be that as it may, it is what Jenkins goes on to say that is of real interest to us.

He says that failure to agree the current constitution means that the whole European project will need to be renegotiated, and continues:

"From this would emerge a sincere divergence between those states wanting more centralisation and those wanting less. This tension would mean two or three 'rings' of association. A new Europe would emerge organically from the old one . . . The French and Germans would move towards closer federation, with Italy and Spain in hesitant alliance. This core would have France at its centre, with the 'Roman empire' states gathered around it. The Mediterranean, not the Atlantic, would be their pond".

This reference to a new Europe based on the Roman Empire and the Mediterranean is indeed interesting, bearing in mind that we see the EU as the fulfilment of the prophecy in Revelation 17 of the emergence of the beast with ten horns, and given that this beast is clearly the successor to the Roman beast of Daniel 7.

Of great interest to us also is Britain's future role in respect of European union. Regarding this, Jenkins quotes a remark made during the Second World War by Winston Churchill to Charles de Gaulle, then leader of the exiled French Government: "When I have to choose between you and Roosevelt [then president of the USA], you should know that I will always choose Roosevelt. And when I have to choose between Europe and the wide open seas . . . I will always choose the wide open seas". Jenkins' comment on this is, "That is just what Blair has done", referring of course to the Iraq war, and indicating that he sees Britain's ties with Europe loosening and Britain choosing a maritime role, exactly in line with our expectations.

Fascinating times surely lie ahead for those who are watching and waiting for the return of the Lord from heaven to overthrow the nations and establish the Kingdom.

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