I.

President of the European Commission praises Portugal for performance during economic crisis. In this MAGAZINE EUROPE we will look at the declarations of Jean-Claude Juncker, who was in Portugal at the invitation of the Presidency of the Republic.

And this year the Sakharov Prize went to the democratic opposition of Venezuela. A recognition for the struggle for freedom in the country ... But a choice that was not consensual in the European Parliament.

Also in this issue: MEPs hold embargo on arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

II.

Welcome to the Europe Magazine.

"Portuguese performance is one of the most impressive." This is how Jean-Claude Juncker portrayed Portugal's economic recovery. The president of the European Commission, who was in the country at the invitation of the Portuguese president Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa praised the sacrifice of the Portuguese. He admitted that this should be recognized by other Europeans.

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission
The Portuguese people and those who directed or directed the country made considerable efforts. Of course, this demanded the Portuguese individual efforts that other Europeans did not give a fair value. I would like to pay tribute here to the many Portuguese who contributed to this national effort, for this collective effort of the Portuguese.

The leader of the community executive said that Portugal is on the right track and that the European Union has always done what had to be done, even during the troika. In this interview with RTP, Juncker also spoke about what he considers the greatest threat to the European project.

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission
I think the greatest threat is nationalism. There is an urgent need to do everything so that Europe has weight and nationalism is a poison that prevents Europe from acting together to weigh in the course of world affairs.

With us, on the telephone from Brussels is Victor Ângelo, a resident commentator of Magazine Europe and an international consultant based in the Belgian capital.

Victor, the president of the European Commission said in this interview given to Paulo Dentinho that Portugal should have a central role in the European Union. What role could that be?
I believe that Jean-Claude Juncker has been a diplomat, because in reality Portugal has played an important role, but it is always difficult to play a central role in the European Union, given that, on the one hand, there are countries that are much more powerful and have a voice much stronger within the European Union and, on the

other hand, Portugal has been very focused on solving some of the great challenges that have been placed on the Portuguese people. But it is clear that it is important that Juncker emphasizes the need for a more active participation, a participation that can be heard on the Portuguese side and if this happens, it will always be well seen even because Portugal will not align itself with any bloc within the European Union and will certainly produce a more neutral opinion and type of suggestion.

What can be done to counter the wave of exaggerated nationalisms that Juncker was talking about?
On the one hand, I agree with Jean-Claude Juncker when he says that nationalisms are the greatest threat to the European project. I also believe that it is important to stress that one of the great adversaries of the European Union, Russia, invests heavily in the development of European nationalisms, with the aim of fragmenting the European Union. Let us say, then, the fact that nationalism has historically led Europe to confrontations and wars. On the other hand, it should also be stressed that Russia's role must be a good neighborly role and not a role of fostering divisions within the European Union. We must also keep in mind that the European Union can not serve as a scapegoat when national policies do not work, because at the moment we have seen a tendency for politicians, the leaders of each of the Member States where there are problems, to say that these problems stem from measures taken in Brussels and not from the bad policies these politicians try to implement.
So there is a whole set of narratives, there is a whole set of explanations, there is a whole work of social communication that must be done.

Victor, and the situation in Catalonia was not left out of this interview. Let's hear Juncker's statements:

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission
Europe has no role to play in the evident conflict between Barcelona and Madrid. It is up to the Spaniards to solve this problem. And I do not want tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, the European Union to consist of 95 different countries. Then we would lose control.

Declarations made at a time when Catalonia declared independence. Victor, Spain is living a deadlock ...
We have to be very prudent in how we treat the issue of Catalonia, we have to be as objective as possible, because we are dealing with an issue that is deeply emotional, that is the question of the independence of a people, what one people consider be your biggest aspiration. The truth is that the position of the EU member countries with regard to Catalonia was instrumental in the process that is underway, ie the Catalan leaders were extremely surprised because there is no European country that had expressed any support to the idea of Catalonia's independence. The other major variable that has influenced the issue of the process has been the fact that more than 1500 companies left Catalonia and transferred the headquarters of these companies to other parts of the Spanish kingdom. The third great aspect is the way Madrid will intervene in the direct management of the region. So far it has been a minimal, very moderate intervention and it is vital that it remains of that type. But there are problems, and one of the major problems that we find in this week's issue of the indictment against the president of the regional government of Catalonia, Puigdmond

that he tried to subvert the constitution, into a sedition process and this course can again lead to large popular demonstrations in Catalonia.

Still in this interview, Jean-Claude Juncker said he expects a more supportive Europe and set an example of the fires in Portugal that started on a Sunday and the first European aid plane arrived on Tuesday. He said he does not want such a Europe. It is also a statement that comes to the forefront of ideas discussed at the European Commission's Episcopal Conference, which this year had as its theme: 'Rethinking Europe: a Christian contribution to the future of the European Union'. This congress opened with a warning of the need to "renew the European project". What are the major challenges facing the Church today on the European continent?
It is evident that the Catholic Church no longer plays in Europe the role it played in the past, that is, in most countries the Christian-Democratic currents have disappeared from political life. Practically the only country where the Catholic Church still has much influence is Poland. There is also great concern and this is another great challenge facing the Catholic Church, a major concern with the weight of Islamic communities in European life, and in particular with the emergence in some countries of Europe and especially in countries of great immigration of political Islam. Anyway, I have read the speech of Pope Francis, he raises fundamental questions, namely the question of people, that Europe must be a people's Europe and not a Europe of statistics, a Europe of numbers, and rates and principles, but of the great principles that people forget. It also raises the great question of what it means to be European; it speaks volumes about dialogue, inclusion, solidarity, development and peace, that is to say, it reminds us again that there are a number of fundamental principles which European values, but also values shared by other peoples, but in Europe they are part of the definition of the European personality. It was also interesting that the Pope in speaking of the European Union reminded us that Europe is a little wider than the European Union, because he spoke of Europe from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains, from the North Pole to the Mediterranean. He reminded us again that the great future of Europe is the integration of all the states that are part of this geopolitical space.

II.

And this year, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of thought was for the democratic opposition of Venezuela. The prize, awarded by the European Parliament, recognizes the fight for freedom. It was greeted with applause, but also laughter, as Andrea Neves of Antena1.
["The Conference of Presidents of the political groups decided to assign the Sakharov Prize 2017 for the freedom of thought to democratic opposition in Venezuela".
The announcement of Antonio Tajani was greatly applauded by the majority of the European Parliament, but there were people who did not agree with what the president was saying.
"There's no political color."
The candidature of the Venezuelan democratic opposition was presented by the Group of the European People's Party and the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, more to the centre, more to the right. But the reaction and laughter exalted Antonio Tajani.

"I ask you to respect the wishes of the majority of Parliament. It's never to laugh when you talk about millions of people starving to death. It is never to laugh when it speaks of the defence of human Rights "
The President of the European Parliament explained the option of the democratic opposition in Venezuela.
"Today we support the struggle of a people for their freedom, remembering our full support for the National Assembly of Venezuela, democratically elected parliament. The only democratically elected parliament. But we also want to launch the call for a peaceful and democratic transition and for the establishment of a humanitarian corridor that allows the help of the suffering of a people. "
The Sahkarov Prize of Freedom of thought has the value of EUR 50000 and will be delivered in December in Strasbourg.

The European Parliament also said that it wanted to reward the courage of the students and politicians who struggle for freedom and face a repressive government. What significance has the Sakharov Prize awarded to the democratic opposition of Venezuela?
It is an important prize, it is a prize that arrives at a time when it is crucial to promote dialogue between the parties in Venezuela, it is also a prize that arrives at a time when the opposition in Venezuela is very divided. The opposition in Venezuela is fragmented, about 30 parties representing this opposition. To some extent, the mature president, through various schemes, has succeeded in regaining initiative, but the truth is that there are very important problems of human rights, there are very important problems of freedom of thought and freedom of action of people and also a The situation in which the economy is completely devastated and that an important part of the population cannot access the goods of first necessity.

And in practice what impact can you have a premium like this?
And in practice, the premium should, say, strengthen the democratic opposition and, to some extent, send them a very strong message that they can rely on the support of the European political class. And it is clear that these types of external support are very important, but it can also be counterproductive, in so far as the government of the mature president can take advantage of the Sakharov Prize to say that he is dealing with an opposition that is a little patriotic opposition Which is sold to Europeans and does not represent the interests of the Venezuelan people but the interests of the former colonial powers.

IV.

In the European Parliament, four political groups defended the embargo on arms sale to Saudi Arabia. The military intervention in Yemen has already made thousands of deaths. More with the journalist Sofia Jesus.

Data from the United Nations reveals that the military campaign led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen has already done at least 10000 of the dead. There are still 2,100 people who have lost their lives due to cholera and 20 million to need humanitarian aid.
This military intervention, which aims to avoid the control of the country by Shia Hutis, is the reason why leaders of four European Parliament groups advocate the imposing an embargo on arms sale to Saudi Arabia.

In a letter addressed to the head of European diplomacy Federica Mogherini, to which the British newspaper the Guardian had access, MEPs accuse Europe of scorning their own laws by selling arms to that country.
An act that, according to it, challenges a code of 2008 that defines rules for the export of technology and military equipment.
Mogherini can now propose an embargo on arms sales, but it will have to rely on the support of the Member States, including the United Kingdom, one of the largest arms exporters in the Saudi Arabia.

Victor, this armed conflict is described as "the world's greatest humanitarian crisis". Is this not the reason for the European Union to embargo the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia?
The European Union cannot, as an institution, take an embargo decision. It could, on the one hand, promote this type of decision within the framework of the United Nations. The United Nations could decide for an embargo against Saudi Arabia and in relation to all those involved in the conflict in Yemen, but the European Union cannot do it by itself unless it can convince its member States to decide that we are at the time D And put a final point on arms exports to Saudi Arabia. The truth is that the decision to export arms is a decision that belongs to each Member State. This decision has never been transferred to Brussels. It is true that also 48% of MEPs are against trade in arms with Saudi Arabia, but the reality is very simple, the reality is that we have European countries that are large arms exporters to Saudi Arabia, the most important of them all being the France.

But then what can the European Union do? It's just that we're talking about the armaments industry...
The reality is very clear, we are talking about an industry that weighs immensely in the economy of several countries, even from some smaller countries in the European Union, such as the Czech Republic, which is a great exporter of arms, has always been and continues to be. This means many Jobs, means an important source of revenue for the state and I think we will continue an ambivalent and ambiguous policy, on the one hand, to continue to talk about the need to protect human rights, in the need to avoid humanitarian crises, Need to promote stability in different regions of the globe where there is a lot of instability and, on the other hand, we will continue to export armament, armament that is increasingly sophisticated, which is increasingly demanding in terms of technologies and which is behind them Of course, the very large support of Governments, because it means an important industrial development, means employment and evidently means taxes.

With us on the phone Victor Angelo, the Magazine Europa commentator.
And before we finish, we have a cultural proposition. An exhibition in Paris on the origins of Dada, a subversive artistic movement with roots in Zurich, Switzerland, and which was born during the First World War.
Through poetry works, collages or performances, artists rejected the traditional values of civilization and appropriating artistic forms of non-Western cultures with roots in Africa, Oceania or the American continent.
The exhibition at the Musée de l ´ Orangerie presents works from various artists Dadaist like Hanna Höch, Sophie Taeuber-ARP and Hugo Ball.
We'll stay here. We're back next week.

[Technical Sheet]

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