

I.

UK accuses Vladimir Putin of ordering attack on former Russian agent poisoned on British soil. In this program we look at the case of Sergei Skripal and the diplomatic crisis between London and Moscow.

In Germany, Angela Merkel is re-elected Chancellor. It took six months and many rounds of negotiations.

And still in this issue: Finland is the happiest country in the world. At least, says a United Nations report, which puts Portugal in the middle of the table.

II.

Welcome to the Europe Magazine.

The British Foreign Minister admitted that it was Vladimir Putin to make the decision to poison the former Russian spy Sergei Skripal. The Kremlin has already reacted and said that they are serious accusations. More with Antena 1.

[In a word, the British Foreign Minister says it is highly likely that Putin himself was giving the order to poison the former Russian agent on English soil. Boris Johnson clarified, however, that the accusation is not against the Russian people. "It is absolutely clear that this was led by Russia and we are awaiting a serious response from the Russians to this situation which has already been condemned globally."

The Kremlin's reaction to these words did not wait. Spokesman Dmitry Peskov, quoted by the Russian news agency, said the words of the UK foreign minister were serious and violated diplomatic rules.

Questioned about the exchange of accusations between the British and the Russians, in particular the boycott by members of Theresa May's governing body to the World Cup, Angela Merkel said this morning that the issue is not on the agenda at the next European Council meeting. The German chancellor added, however, that she hoped that Russia would help clarify the matter as soon as possible.

Moscow denies any involvement in the former Russian spy's poisoning and even suggested that London turned this case into an attempt to spur anti-Russian hysteria.]

23 British diplomats now have a week to leave Russia. A retaliation that can be considered asymmetrical, as explained by Antena 1 commentator for Eastern European affairs, José Milhazes.

It can be considered asymmetric, since in addition to the expulsion of 23 diplomats from Britain, that is, half of the British embassy staff, Russia also closed the British Council and refused to allow the opening of the Consulate General of Great Britain in St Petersburg.

And with us on the phone from Brussels is Victor Ângelo, former United Nations Deputy Secretary-General and international consultant, based in the Belgian capital.

Victor, can this reaction from Russia really be considered asymmetrical?

If asymmetric means that it was beyond reasonable, it is evident that yes. The British Council is an institution that is not linked in any way to British propaganda and government, and in addition, it is very popular in Russia in the sense that it is one of the ways that Russians have to learn English. The closure of the British Council was, in my view, disproportionate and the closure of the United Kingdom consulate in St. Petersburg was disproportionate. We are here before an answer that goes beyond what was expected. The next question is will the UK approve a counter-response. I think that at this point the advice given to the British prime minister is that it does not go in that direction, that is, to avoid the escalation.

And what consequences can we expect from this almost fictional episode?

On the one hand, I think that it is fundamental to maintain the unity of the leading leaders of the Western world, and especially in the Atlantic Alliance. The Russian government and the Russian president were extremely surprised by the fact that Britain was able to mobilize the support of the United States, France and Germany during the week. We must continue to maintain this unity, we must continue to put pressure on Russia, but at the same time we need to open new avenues of dialogue, and one of the possible channels for dialogue is the French president's May visit to the Kremlin. I hope that this meeting which is planned will not be annulled and that, on the one hand, we will continue on the way, so to speak, to criticize and sanction this kind of action from Russia, but on the other hand we continue to explore the possibilities of dialogue which are fundamental.

Let us also remember that all this happened shortly before the Russian elections, - and we are going to the elections there - but it was somehow the Kremlin's attempt to mobilize the population to the polls?

It is hard to understand. I think that yes, I think that in particular the taking of certain measures on the eve of the elections strengthened Putin's hand and showed the Russians that the leader of his country is not intimidated by the western countries, even when these western countries are united. But it remains to be seen - and I say I am one of those who do not understand - the reasons for an attempted murder 15 days before the Russian presidential elections. Because? Why this time? It is also true that secret services and espionage live in murky and muddy waters and it is not very easy to understand the objectives of the secret services and spies, especially spies from the East.

And in relation to the presidential, Putin won this Sunday with 76.6%, an overwhelming victory. Was it expected?

Yes, all the prognoses and all the analyzes showed that Vladimir Putin was the candidate, he was the only candidate who had the chance to win the election. In fact, the key issue for Vladimir Putin was how much he would win the election. A victory over 70% is evident that it is a loose victory, a victory that gives him huge chances of remaining the supreme ruler of the Russian federation. It will continue to be, so to speak, who determines all aspects of Russian politics, including aspects of foreign policy, but also and, above all, aspects of domestic politics, given that Russia is a vast country, is a multicultural, multiethnic country. In Vladimir Putin's reading it is essential that those in power in the Kremlin have a lot of strength, have a lot of political legitimacy to keep the country together.

III.

And from Russia to Germany.

Angela Merkel was re-elected in the fourth term as Chancellor of the country. It happened six months after the elections, as the journalist Lina Ferreira tells us.

Angela Merkel is back at the helm of the German government and again aboard a coalition.

Six months after the elections ... and several rounds of talks to form a coalition, Merkel is again elected Chancellor.

Of the 709 members of the Bundestag, 688 valid votes were counted: 364 Members voted in favor, 315 against and nine abstained.

This is the fourth time Merkel has been elected Chancellor, the first being 13 years ago in 2005.

The German leader will rule the country in a coalition, made up of conservatives of the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union; and the Social Democrats.

Victor, in the first takes of possession, chancelestiestie in black. This time he appeared in white. Can this color change be a metaphor for what comes next? A new hope of this figure now returned to the post and who arrives for the fourth time to power quite fragile?

She has to show that she will open a new cycle, even because she probably will not do a fifth term. This fourth term is the last chance for Merkel to show that it will continue to transform Germany, which will continue to strengthen the German economy and that will allow Germany to be one of the driving forces behind the transformation of the European Union. It will enter this political cycle to think above all else in history and to think of the way the German memory will see its permanence in power for many years.

And what are the flags of this government?

They will continue the modernization of the economy, the reinforcement, so to speak, of the industrial sector and, on the other hand, will also bet heavily on the training of young people. At present one of the great flags of Germany is the vocational training of young people, they want to be an example in terms of vocational education and they will continue to invest immensely in this, because they know perfectly well that one of the great challenges of the next decades in Europe will be employment of young people. And they will try everything so that education adapts to the new needs of economy and, above all, to a deeply computerized and digitized economy.

And internationally?

At the moment the key to it is the strengthening of the Eurozone. It will not think in terms of the European Union in general, it will mainly think about the 19 countries that are part of the Euro Zone and will try to consolidate this Euro Zone so that not only the European currency continues to strengthen, if it continues to be a relatively strong currency, but also so that the economies of the European Union can converge from the economic point of view.

Speaking of the EU, Angela Merkel has met with Emmanuel Macron and the two have announced that they will present a roadmap before June to reform the European Union. What can we expect from this road map?

This roadmap will fundamentally address economic and financial issues. It will also have a component of defense and, moreover, will obviously continue to talk about immigration issues. In the area of economics and finance, the key question is whether there should be a European Finance Minister or not. Between France and Germany there are some disagreements over the role of a common minister for finance in the euro area. The French are much more favorable to the appearance of this type of function than the Germans are, but they will continue to discuss this.

Still in relation to the migration issue, we have the recent disturbances registered in Spain after the death of the Senegalese migrant. "No human being is illegal," he heard on the streets of Madrid. What new look can Europe have on this issue?

The truth is that Europe continues to focus on a security perspective on immigration and the response remains a police response, border control and that is where things are going. Last Friday, there was a meeting in Niamey, the capital of Niger, where the European Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Interior ... And the countries that were represented are extremely clear in terms of their concern about the issue of immigration. France was represented, represented Germany, Spain and Italy. And on the other side were several African countries in the Sahel and West Africa zones. And what was discussed at this meeting between the European ministers and the African ministers? Fundamentally, how to fight against immigrant smugglers, that is, we continue from the perspective of security, from the perspective of repression and from the perspective of trying to avoid the phenomenon of migration from the points of origin, that is, controlling the three great migratory routes that of Africa bring migrants to Europe and these three major routes are the route coming from Sudan and Eritrea via Libya to Italy; the other route brings immigrants from Nigeria and neighboring Nigeria through Niger, Algeria and then Libya; and the third major route that will probably be one of the routes that will develop more quickly is the route that passes through Morocco and that of Morocco tries to enter the Spanish territories.

IV.

We are back to the conversation with Victor Ângelo.

For now we tell you that Finland is the happiest country in the world At least is what the United Nations World Happiness Report of 2018 says. Finland has passed another Scandinavian country, Norway, and is the happiest country in the world. In all, 156 countries were analyzed. The nations of Northern Europe remain at the top; Portugal has climbed 12 places, is now number 77 and has been surpassed by countries like Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Kosovo. The UN document examines data on GDP, social support, social freedoms and corruption. Since the beginning of this study, the happiness of the migrants was analyzed this year for the first time.

Victor, happiness happens in Northern Europe and at low temperatures, Why?

In fact, happiness happens in virtually every Nordic country. It's because? Because they are extremely stable countries, very safe countries, countries where there is good governance, where there is practically no corruption. They are also countries where there has been a great commitment to social protection, equality between men and women and, in addition, other variables, which is respect for the environment and, above all, an education of children that values the initiative and imagination of

children entering the education system. In fact, we are talking about countries that give primary importance - and this is the very specific case of Finland - to primary school age children, where every child is indeed as if he is something extremely precious and is followed with attention very particular and all your creative faculties are developed to the maximum. On the other hand, teachers in Finland - and in the Scandinavian countries in general - are professionals who are very considerate, highly socially reputed, and extremely well paid.

This is a good occasion to talk about Scandinavia and even the Nordic countries in general. How did this peace and relative social equality develop in this group of nations?

These countries have a great ethnic homogeneity, that is, traditionally everyone was blond, everyone had blue eyes and there was, so to speak, great solidarity at the community level. So that's one of the issues. The other issue is also the fact that local power has for many years been very forceful, that is, are extremely decentralized states, where people are called to take charge of their own lives and to take responsibility for the management of your community. They are also countries that have invested immensely in social protection and social security systems, that is, when you are Norwegian or when you are Finnish, it is well known that the country's social security system will take care of the person from birth to at the time of his funeral.

Victor Ângelo with us here every week in the Europe Magazine. And we entered the second week of Literary Festival - Route of Letters. Rui Tavares, writer and essayist were one of the guests. Magazine Europa spoke with the former MEP on the book "The Irony of the European Project", on sale at the festival's bookstore. This is also our suggestion this week.

Rui Tavares, writer

One-third of this book is to explain how we got here, not only from that simpler point of view that the European integration treaties have, that go a little bit from treaty to treaty and what happened in the change of each treaty. It is to be explained, for example, by means of literary texts, among them the "Viscount Cut to Half" of Italo Calvino, or texts by Gogol or texts by Orwell, and therefore texts that give us access to a certain history of European ideas. Part of the book is about the great financial crisis from 2008 and the consequences it had on Europe and the final third of the book is devoted to the question of how to build an alternative to the European project, how to build a future for the project European. So it is a book that is a third story, a third diagnosis and a third proposal.

To conclude then this Europe Magazine the suggestion of the book of Rui Tavares, "The Irony of the European Project".

We stay here until the week!

[Datasheet]

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