

Malala's Prize

Europe's major Human Rights prize, the **Sakharov Prize**, was awarded in the parliament last week. The winner was Malala – who, aged only sixteen, had spoken out for the right of women to be educated in Pakistan and had been shot and almost killed by the Taliban.

Her acceptance speech to the parliament was short but clear, simple, and poignant. ***"57 million in Pakistan have no education...they don't want play-stations or mobile-phones or chocolate...they just want a book."***

I was one of the fortunate few who had a photograph with her (below).



EU Accounts signed off by the EU Auditors

See http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/PRAR12/a13_36.EN.pdf

Yet, the Daily Mail and Daily Express, and UKIP's spokesman, reported the opposite. The auditors' press release makes it clear that there are still errors in EU spending, affecting a figure less than 5 per cent of what it pays out. It states however that this is not a measurement of fraud or waste, but rather where rules were not followed properly, e.g. when goods or services were bought without the proper application of public purchasing rules. A lot of the responsibility for this rests with the national governments for not following the pre-agreed rules. Particular

suspicion lies on Greece, Italy and Spain.

Enlargement of the EU – the final shape ?

The final size of the EU is becoming clearer. Putin is pressurising his neighbours – Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan – to withdraw their applications to join the EU, if they wish to continue to be supplied with Russian gas and oil. And Turkey's government has come out in support of ex-President Morsi in Egypt so appears to be siding with the Islamic world. So, it seems that the only countries likely to join are the Balkans (Albania, Serbia, Bosnia) and Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. Which would mean a final EU of maximum size 35 countries. Quite enough, in my opinion.

European elections next May

The major theme of next year's European elections is becoming clearer. Last time, in 2009, it was entirely about expenses in the House of Commons and Europe was not discussed at all. UKIP benefited because, as one voter insisted to me, "they are not corrupt like all the parties in the House of Commons" because UKIP have no seats in the Commons. Since then, more than one UKIP MEP has been sent to prison and others are on bail. Next year (voting will be on Thursday 22 May), the debate will be about the referendum in 2017. The Lib Dems seem to be the only party whole-heartedly saying that the UK must remain members of the EU to protect jobs in the UK. Businesses strongly support our position. If UKIP were to score a triumph in the European election next May, it would make the work of defending British jobs much more difficult as businesses see the writing on the wall and withdraw investment from the UK.

End-of-year Greetings card.

To save both money and trees, I shall send you an electronic Greetings card from the parliament in the middle of December. If you would prefer to receive a paper one, please let me know, because there is a small stock of them.

All the best

Bill Newton Dunn