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Prosperity vs Democracy in Africa

Zimbabwe is much in the news at the present, as its corrupt, bigoted, incompetent, thuggish dictator tries to cling to power in the face of overwhelming electoral evidence that its people no longer want him. Let's hope that one way or another Robert Mugabe is deposed and finds himself in due course in the International Court of Justice in The Hague, alongside his old pal Charles Taylor, with both of them locked away until death for their abominable crimes.

Kenya is another African country where a defeated president refuses to bow to what President George Bush Senior, when confronted with his own electoral drubbing in 1992, graciously and aptly described as "the majesty of the people".

In the same continent over to the West - both geologically and politically - lies land-locked Botswana. Its president, 68-year-old Festus Mogae has by contrast just amicably handed over the reins to his vice-president Seretse Khama Ian Khama, merely because

he had reached the ten-year limit imposed by its 1966 Constitution.

Mr Mogae breaks the mould by both ceding power peacefully and by respecting the constitution. Compare:

- Nigeria's president from 1999 to 2007, the septuagenarian Olusegun Obasanjo, tried (unsuccessfully) to amend his country's constitution to allow him a third four-year term in office (actually a fourth term because he had already served 3½ years as president following a coup in the 1970s).
- Cameroon's fellow septuagenarian president Paul Biya, who has been in office continually for the past 26 years, has just strong-armed his rubber-stamp parliament to scrap the Constitution's limit of 14 years so he can be "re-elected" for another seven years.

Of these five African countries, four have a GDP per person of only \$4½ per person per day, yet one generates \$40 a head, and that's Botswana. Might there be a connection? It's true prosperous Botswana has diamonds, but poverty-ridden Nigeria has oil, so it's not resources per se that makes the difference.

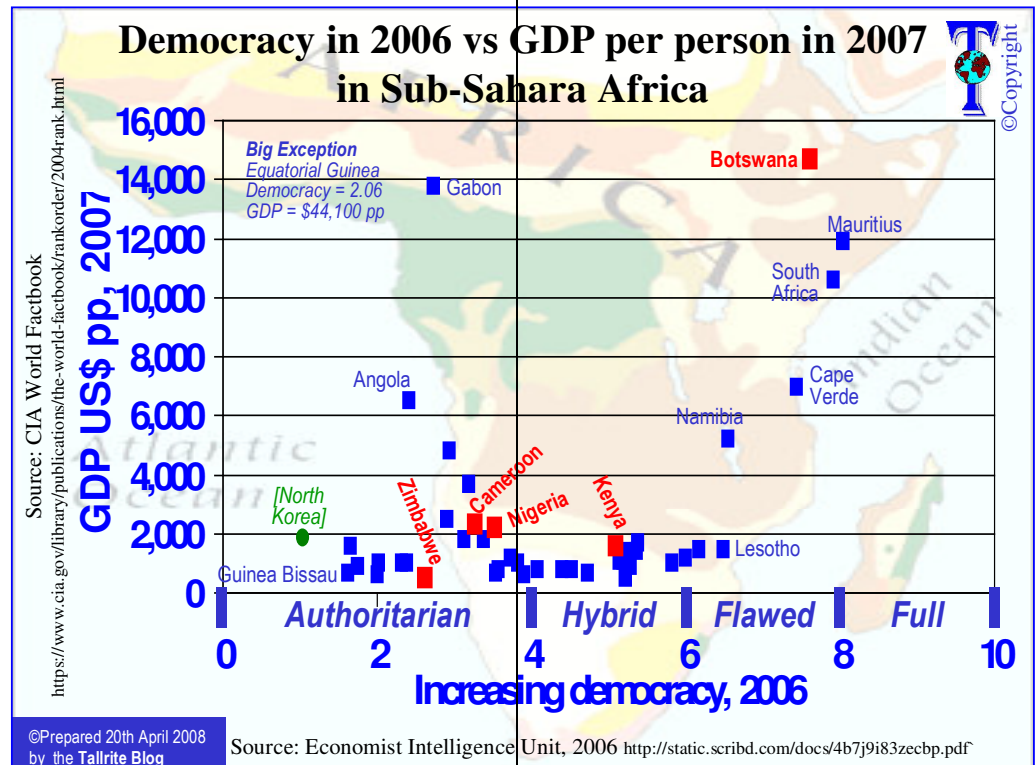
So I thought it would be interesting to compare GDP figures of all sub-Saharan African countries with the quality of their respective democracies, which vary from

fully democratic (Mauritius) to highly authoritarian (Guinea Bissau).

- **GDP figures** came from the mighty CIA World Fact Book; I used annual GDP on per capita as a proxy for average income of the population. The units are US\$ calculated on a purchasing power parity basis.
- I found **democracy measurements** published by the Economist Intelligence Unit, which scores 167 countries from 10

(perfect democracy) to 0 (perfect authoritarianism). Sweden with 9.88 ranks top of the list, while at the bottom - to no-one's surprise - languish the unfortunate oppressed North Koreans with just 1.03, whose score for individual liberties is zero.

The chart below summarises my findings in respect of the 44 countries that comprise sub-Saharan Africa. The four referred to above



are shown and tagged in red, while the other forty are in blue, a few of which have labels. Forlorn North Korea, the world's least democratic state, appears in green.

If you discount the anomalies - such as Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and perhaps Angola - there is a clear trend. The more entrenched your democracy, the richer you get, but only once you can claw your way well into the "flawed" category, ie with a score of 6½ (such as Namibia) or above.

But what about those anomalies.

- For the past three decades, the 600,000 citizens of little **Equatorial Guinea** have been under the firm thumb of the President, Teodoro Obiang Nguema, who since 1979 has been routinely winning "elections" with over 90% of the vote. The government functions poorly and civil liberties are severely constrained. Yet a windfall from recent oil discoveries around its outlying islands (leading to exports of nearly 400,000 barrels a day) coupled with a small population, have provided a huge GDP figure of \$44,000 per person. That's up there with Hong Kong (\$42k), Ireland (\$46k) and the USA (also \$46k). But most of it is pocketed by the president, his family and cronies, leaving the vast majority of his people uneducated, housed in slums and

scrabbling for a living. From this, you can get a sense of why EG was such an attractive coup target for Simon Mann, Mark Thatcher and those mercenaries in 2004. It is likely, moreover, that the local people would have benefited from it, because the mercenaries would have ensured that whoever they appointed to rule EG would have had to conform to certain minimum levels of competence, unlike the current incumbents.

- **Gabon** is another country which seems to buck the trend: very authoritarian (2.72) yet wealthy (\$13,800 pp). But it too has a small population (1½ million) along great oil wealth (exports of 250,000 bbl/day), most of it snaffled by president-for-life Omar Bongo, who has had himself handsomely (80%+) re-elected for the past 41 years. So again, though the GDP pp is high, most Gabonese (including pygmy tribes in the forest) remain very poor, so the high \$ per person figure is misleading.
- It is also noteworthy that **island states** all seem to embrace democracy more readily than on the mainland, for example Mauritius (8.0), Cape Verde Islands (7.4), Madagascar (5.8), Mozambique (5.3). You could almost call Lesotho an island, surrounded as it is by South Africa instead of the sea, which with its democracy score an

impressive 6.5 could be on the verge of an economic breakthrough despite some grim fundamentals.

In conclusion, this study reinforces what has been said many times but ignored even more often, that the secret to prosperity is democracy.

It's also the secret to peace because no two democracies ever go to war with each other and even their internal conflicts (eg Northern Ireland, Basque country, Italian Red Brigades) are limited. In the chart above, all the serious civil strife in Africa (eg Sudan, Kenya, Zimbabwe) takes place in countries whose democracy ratings are less than 6.

Mark Humphys explains how, "*there is a way to have eternal peace. We have discovered it already. It is not religion. It is not hippie love. It is not being nice to people. It is not transcendental meditation. It is not World government. It is not the UN. It is democracy*".

He's right.

External Interference by Lisbon Foreigners

Last week I went to a high-falutin' meeting in Dublin Castle, one of Ireland's poshest venues for serious gatherings. It was put on by the National Forum on Europe, a taxpayer-sponsored "*neutral*" body which is however unashamedly exhorting the Irish electorate to vote Yes to the execrable Lisbon Treaty. The meeting was chaired by some barely conscious geriatric called Maurice Hayes, and for some reason they let a foreigner wander in and give both the opening and closing addresses. Though it is none of his business to insert himself between the Irish and their constitutional referendum, this slick

Portuguese guy did his passionate best to persuade the Irish to vote Yes. Inexplicably, the NFE also did what it could to help his (partisan) cause. It carefully seated various Irish dignitaries in a horseshoe around the top table - Yes advocates all together and cosy, No advocates scattered. The great unwashed masses (including me) had to sit beyond the horseshoe and out of sight of the TV cameras.

In a carefully choreographed "*open discussion*", eighteen horseshoe people were invited in a pre-decided sequence to ask questions and put their views via a three-minute speech. According to my count, twelve spoke in favour of Lisbon and six against - what a surprise that 2:1 ratio was! Once again I was intrigued by some of my No bedfellows (eg leftist Sinn Fein, Socialist Workers, Communist Party, Irish Farmers Association), and opponents (rightist Progressive Democrats, Irish Business & Employers Confederation). But I don't care how mistaken the reasons for which some might vote No, so long as they vote No. One particular contribution stands out for its punchline and the delighted applause it attracted from fellow-dissenters like me. Sinn Fein's ghastly Mary Lou MacDonald ended her short diatribe with the stirring clarion call "*No way, José!*". Ah yes, I remember now the name of that favoured foreigner - José Manuel something.

Needless to say, no opportunity was granted to us the general public (who as far as I could tell were overwhelmingly against Lisbon) to put questions to the great man. Otherwise, I would have asked him what he was doing here as a foreigner. I would have also

alluded to another alien interference and to an alien non-interference.

For just three days earlier, the NFE accorded, equally anti-Constitutionally, a similar platform to another foreigner. This time it was some frumpy woman from, apparently, eastern Germany. She too spouted off at length trying to tell the Irish people how to vote in their own private referendum (*hello-o-o, you're not Irish*). My spy tells me the format was the same - pre-planned questions from favoured panjandrums, in the same approximate proportion of two Yes contributions for every No. Naturally, there was no chance in this "open discussion" for the ignorant hoi-polloi to butt in. And as with the Portugese guy, the foreign lady - I think her name was something like Angular or Angela - was given the last word, just in case anyone thought too much airtime was being granted to the treasonous naysayers.

Meanwhile, over in the rest of the EU, frustration is seething that no-one but the Irish are being allowed a referendum. In fairness, the seethers are all against Lisbon, since the pro-Lisboners are very happy to have the treaty ratified by pliant parliaments. Thus there are thousands of people who would love to help Ireland's No campaign - not least the majorities in France and Holland who voted No to the almost identical Constitutional Treaty. plus three-quarters of Britain. They see this country as the last bastion that can put a stop to Lisbon -

even though the European Parliament has, astonishingly, already voted 4:1 to disrespect the Irish referendum. (Interestingly, one of the disrespecters was actually an Irish MEP, Proinsias De Rossa, who was involved in a much publicised fracas last week over his - in my view perfidious - vote.)

So why aren't they here in numbers and being given platforms by the NFE and by other worthy "neutral" bodies as well as partisan ones? The most notorious of these people is probably the rightist Jean Marie Le Pen, who reached the two-man run-off stage for the French presidency in 2002. But he set down a marker when he decided not to visit Ireland, specifically because he feared those in favour of the treaty would exploit his presence as "external interference in a national debate". Other aliens have kept their voices down for precisely the same reason, though I would be surprised if they are not - albeit covertly - providing assistance, just as pro-Lisbon foreigners like José and Angela have been.

I am just amazed to see the brutish Jean Marie exhibit a diplomatic sensitivity badly lacking in those two otherwise polished interlopers.

It is time for the No camp to speak out against "external interference in a national debate". We shouldn't let them away with it.

Newt Gingrich on Islamic Violence

I have nothing to add to these few words by Newt Gingrich, and urge you to view this five-minute video clip.

Hattip: John D in Dublin

Heroic Hillary Under Fire in Bosnia

For a bit of light relief, let's now re-visit Heroic Hillary's renowned visit to war-torn Bosnia in 1996. It seems she wasn't spoofing after all. From this video clip you can see that stuff really did happen ... [*shows fake bombs going off all around Hillary*]

Eat your heart out, Barack the pansy - and so-called tough-guy McCain.

Biffo's Limericks/Offalies

Bertie Ahern recently announced he would step down in May as Ireland's Taoiseach (prime minister) after eleven years in the job. He is under a cloud for having trousered, when he was Finance Minister in the 1990s, chunks of money (up to IR£500,000 and counting) which he can explain neither to a planning-corruption Tribunal nor to the general public, despite extraordinary verbal contortions.

Brian Cowen, the current Finance Minister and Tánaiste (deputy Taoiseach), has been appointed as the new leader of the Fianna Fáil party which heads the ruling coalition, and as such he will be crowned the next Taoiseach. He is an imposing presence, though no beauty in Ian Paisley's rheumy eyes, what with those Jagger-esque over-thick Catholic lips. He hails from Clara, a village in Co Offaly, and his endearing, affectionate nickname is BIFFO, Big Ignorant F***er From Offaly.



As part of the general merriment that accompanies such transfers of power, RTE the state broadcaster ran a competition, with a handsome prize of a coffee pot plus €1,000, for the best Limericks submitted - though in deference to Biffo's origins, the ditties are being renamed Offalies.

Here are the best four Offalies - and as you can see they are of peerless quality. Those of a strong constitution can even listen to them in the original (minute 19½ onwards).

4th Prize: (Dept of Finance) Michael Duffy

There's a man from Clara called Brian
Who wanted to be Taoiseach from age nine
Now he's nearly there
With his full head of hair
And he's hoping he'll keep everyone in line.

3rd Prize: Sean O'Callaghan, Waterford

There was a gruff lawyer named Cowen
Who was famed for his scowl and his frown
Then Bertie resigned
And so Brian was divined
With a smile to take over the crown

2nd Prize: Donal Purcell

There once was a man named Brian
Cowen
An Offaly man of renown
He looked after our treasure
With skill and great measure
And now he's the jewel in the crown.

Winner: Silvia di Pianni

There was a TD born in Clara
Who said I'll be Taoiseach tomorra
Cause though I'm not purty
Old Bertie is dirty
So pass me the baton, A Chara 🇮🇪

🇮🇪 A Chara is Irish for "Dear Sir"

Let's hope the calibre of Biffo's leadership at least matches the dizzy heights of these masterful Offalies.

Issue 174's Comments to Cyberspace

Since my ability to get published in the Irish Times has been curtailed because I now write occasional columns, I will from now on include below various published contributions I make to major websites. The titles refer to the articles on which I am commenting.

- **Terror in academia**

Comment in the Spectator-hosted Melanie Philips Blog on 15th April 2008

Anyone who wants to equate Israeli self-defence (or as Dr Jackson would have it, "state terrorism") with Palestinian terrorism should consider the following.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be resolved at a stroke. The Palestinians merely have to stop attacking Israel; that's all!

This would immediately open the way to constructive negotiations. Unfortunately, as we have so often seen, it won't work the other way round.

Anyone who advocates or defends continued attacks by Palestinians on Israel cannot also want a peaceful, just outcome.

Moreover, this simple test establishes who, of the pair, are the true terrorists. No amount of anti-Semitic ranting will change the facts.

- **Winning an asymmetric war**

Comment in the Spectator-hosted Melanie Philips Blog on 12th April 2008

Maj-Gen Yaakov Amidror and Melanie are of course right.

I am surprised she didn't also cite the Northern Ireland peace process, which came about only after the IRA was if - not defeated - neutralised, giving the British army in effect a 'sufficient victory'.

Its tactics were often along the ruthless lines described by Amidror. For example, that (in)famous ambush by the SAS in Gibraltar killed three IRA unarmed terrorists in 1988, who were planning to blow up the weekly changing-of-the-guard ceremony. Many still complain that their human rights were abused, but it had a salutary effect on the IRA.

Only after many encounters and other dirty tricks were Sinn Fein/IRA willing to talk peace, and in fact sought it out.

Today, all of Ireland is the better for it.

- **My narrow escape from an ambush by the liberal left**

Comment in the Irish Independent

on 11th April 2008, on a column by Kevin Myers

Kevin [Myers], you start off with "We know what 'anti-war' and 'peace' mean in the current argot: it means Yanks out".

Well, I for one don't know this, and disagree with your diagnosis except to the extent that "Yanks out" is a symptom not a pathology.

In the current argot, anything or anyone sporting 'anti-war' or 'peace' in its name or speech, means only one thing: pro-war pro-the-anti-democrat's-side. They most certainly do not want peace in any conflict zone; they want a war that results in the defeat of democrats, so that the tyrants and murderers can prevail. Only this kind of war equates, in their Orwellian minds, to peace.

It so happens that the US is among the democrats and tries - however ineptly - to support democracy. Hence the 'Yanks out' epithet.

- **Notions of gender have been corrupted by sexual politics**

Comment in the Irish Independent on 8th April 2008, on a column by Kevin Myers

Frankly I couldn't care less how freakishly people choose to behave, so long as it is by and/or between consenting adults.

But this Thomas Beatie has crossed the line. He has deliberately and knowingly brought an innocent child into the world in such a way that it will be denied knowledge of its own father (and vice-

versa), and will be denied even a father figure during its upbringing.

And why? Purely to satisfy the desires of a selfish individual.

No-one has ever demonstrated that in raising a child a father is, effectively, surplus to requirements. Until someone can do this convincingly, no-one has a right to deliberately exclude the father from a child's life. It amounts to a social experiment to satisfy the vanity of the adult at the expense of the child's fundamental human rights. This adds up to child abuse.

Ditto for those who would deliberately exclude the mother.

- **The Club of Tyranny**

Comment in the Spectator-hosted Melanie Philips Blog on 7th April 2008

We should not be surprised that the UN has become a despots' club - only 42% of its member-states, each with an equal vote, are proper democracies and many of those are just "dots" like Andorra.

So, being the thoroughly democratic institution that it is, the UN is dominated by tyrants and anti-democratic thugs of various hues.

Institutionalised defence by the UN of thuggish behaviour is therefore inevitable and irreversible.

Thus, I fully agree with Ian C.

It is time for the democracies to walk out of the UN (and cut off its funding) in order

to set up a new United Democracies. The UD, open only to proper democracies as decided by the UD, would be unashamedly dedicated to spreading Western style democracy across the world, in the sure knowledge that this is the foundation of international peace & security; that true democracy eliminates poverty; that elimination of poverty promotes effective environmentalism & countless other benefits.

See [United Democracies](#)

- **Should the permitted level of blood alcohol for drivers be lowered?**

Comment in the Irish Times on 24th March 2008

Seán Coleman is right to point out many reasons to punish the illegitimate Communist dictatorship ruling China for its appalling human rights record. However I agree with Pat Hickey that traditional Olympic boycotts don't work. But there is another way; another more democratic way involving personal empowerment. Let the games go ahead. Let no athletes be denied their chance to prove they're the world's best. Instead, it is the spectators who should boycott the games. For, from the Chinese perspective, worse even than a few countries not showing up in Beijing will be TV pictures

beamed across the world, of empty stadiums whilst the contests proceed, and everyone knowing why. Personally, I have cancelled my plans to attend.

Quotes for Issue 174

----- J I H A D -----

Quote: "If Israel wants to take any action against the Islamic republic, we will eliminate Israel from the scene of the universe."

Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, Iran's deputy commander-in-chief, who would clearly not utter such an apocalyptic statement without prior clearance from his political bosses.

Quote: "We promise our Muslim brothers that we will strive as much as we can to deal blows to the Jews inside Israel and outside it, with Allah's help and guidance."

Al Qaeda's second-in-command Ayman al Zawahiri reminds us in a recent audio recording that his organization is not enamoured of "apes and pigs" anywhere.

But since, though vociferously denied, Osama is long dead, Mr al Zawahiri would have to in fact be Al Qaeda's first-in-command

Quote: "I condemn, in the strongest terms, the airing of Geert Wilders' offensively anti-Islamic film. There is no justification for hate speech or incitement to violence. The right of

free expression is not at stake here."

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, in the best tradition of his illustrious (LoL) predecessor, incites Al Qaeda to perpetrate violence on Geert Wilders for having produced a short movie, "Fitna" (meaning "strife"), which accurately links well-known acts of Islamic violence to Koranic exhortations for same.

----- Z I M B A B W E -----

Quote: "Zanu-PF did not fight a liberation war to have Zimbabweans vote incorrectly."

Henry Muchena, Zimbabwean air vice-marshal (fearing indictment)

----- T I B E T -----

Quote: "One country which has been exploited and suppressed and suffered for far too long is Tibet."

The description of Tibet as a "country" by John Gormley, Ireland's Minister for the Environment and head of the Green Party, provokes the Chinese Ambassador Liu Bi-wei, to stomp out of the Green Party's annual conference in a huff.

Quote: "If someone dares to sabotage the torch relay in Tibet and its scaling of Mount Everest, we will seriously punish him and will not be soft handed."

Qiangba Puncog, China's

appointed governor of the paradoxically-named "Tibetan Autonomous Region", shows his soft side

Quote: "If freedom-loving people throughout the world do not speak out against China and the Chinese in Tibet, we have lost all moral authority to speak out on human rights."

Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives, before cheering crowds of Tibetans in northern India, where - to the fury of the Chinese Politburo - she had gone to meet the Dalai Lama.

----- U S A -----

Quote: "I remember landing under sniper fire. There was supposed to be some kind of a greeting ceremony at the airport, but instead we just ran with our heads down to get into the vehicles to get to our base."

Videos show that in fact she walked calmly from the plane, accompanied by daughter Chelsea. They were greeted by a young girl in a small ceremony on the tarmac and there was no sign of tension or any danger.

Faced with the damning evidence widely available in this wretched Youtube clip, she then decided to un-remember her graphic description.

Quote: "We don't have slave masters, we got mayors. But they are still the same white people who are presiding

<p>over systems where black people are not able to be educated. You got some preachers that are house niggers. You got some elected officials that are house niggers. Rather than them try and break this up, they're gonna fight you to protect that white man."</p> <p>Baptist pastor James Meeks who is also a <u>State Senator</u> for Illinois preaches from the pulpit. He is another dubious religious mentor attached to presidential aspirant Senator Barack Obama.</p>	<p>----- BRITAIN -----</p> <p><u>Quote:</u> "I don't think anybody in this city is shocked about what consenting adults do. As long as you don't involve children, animals and vegetables, they leave you to get on and live their own life in their own way."</p> <p>Mayor of London Ken Livingstone after his paternity of five sons and daughters by three mothers was revealed. Which, of course, does involve "children" - five of them. He so despises at least one of them and so disrespects his/her fundamental rights to parenthood that the "father" column on the birth certificate has been <u>left blank</u>. By the way, what's wrong with sex with vegetables?</p>	<p>other ministers can't reach".</p> <p><u>Quote:</u> "Who would have thought that Nelson Mandela would have been free in our lunchtime."</p> <p>Britain's dour Scottish prime minister Gordon Brown gets his words deliciously twisted, when he tries to lighten up, without his usual life-saving notes, at a conference of the Scottish Labour Party</p>	<p><u>Quote:</u> "I have done no wrong and wronged no-one."</p> <p>Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern in his resignation speech, reflecting on Tribunal proceedings that strong suggest he took payments corruptly when Minister of Finance in the 1990s</p> <p><u>Quote:</u> "We had no money on him. I thought he was going out for a run to keep himself warm."</p> <p>Gobsmacked zillionaire owner Michael O'Leary, notorious boss of Ryanair, when his horse "Hear the Echo" unexpectedly won the Irish Grand National at 33-1</p>
<p>----- UKRAINE -----</p> <p><u>Quote:</u> "You will forgive me, but I would not like to see the key, fundamental principle of the Alliance's activity, open doors, to be replaced by a veto for a country which is not even a member."</p> <p>Victor Yushchenko, president of Ukraine, commenting on baleful threats from Russia should NATO invite Ukraine to join</p>	<p><u>Quote:</u> "My comments do not accurately reflect my views."</p> <p>Britain's junior culture minister Gerry Sutcliffe, as immortalised on a beer mat, who can't decide whether alcohol taxes are too high or just right. The beer mat helpfully clarifies that "Gerry Sutcliffe refreshes the parts</p>	<p>----- IRELAND -----</p> <p><u>Quote:</u> "The Omagh bombing was an infamous terrorist atrocity which [has] led to a civil legal action unprecedented in the UK and probably in the world. For the first time, the victims of terrorism are confronting the alleged perpetrators ... private citizens are confronting terrorists in our courts."</p> <p>Lord Daniel Brennan QC in the Belfast High Court, acting for those bereaved by the Real IRA Omagh bombing of 15th August 1998, in an innovative civil action against five men believed to be responsible. None have been convicted in a criminal court, so the victims hope to punish the perpetrators in a civil court where the standard of proof is lower, through punitive damages (which they will probably be unable to pay), but mainly through public naming-and-shaming.</p>	
<p>----- EUROPE -----</p> <p><u>Quote:</u> "No way José!"</p> <p>Sinn Fein's Mary Lou MacDonald tells EU Commission President José Manuel Barosso what she thinks of the Lisbon Treaty which he wants the Irish electorate to approve in a Constitutional referendum.</p> <p><u>Quote:</u> "I am mad."</p>			