

SNAPSHOT

Pascal Lamy

Chef de Cabinet to Jacques Delors



Right-hand man: Lamy, right, talking to Delors

Age: 47

Reputation: In the corridors of the Commission, he is described as Delors' "hatchet man", "Rottweiler" or "Exocet". Jealous colleagues call him Delors' "Napoleon".

A bit of a bruiser, then? Lamy insists that his reputation does not do him justice. "This is not a trait of my character, but a consequence of my function," he says.

What is his function? Delors' bodyguard? No. More of a fixer. The Commission president is notoriously squeamish about getting involved in the nitty gritty of day-to-day administration, preferring to pontificate on the great moral dilemmas of our age in private and leave Lamy to keep the troops in order.

How does Lamy command his forces? By intimidation, mainly. He keeps staff on their toes by stirring rumours, fostering insecurities and lobbing faarsomely intellectual grenades in their direction. Infuriatingly, he never appears to lose his cool.

Does he ever let up? No. A workaholic who runs marathons in his spare time and has trained himself to manage on barely three hours' sleep a night, he expects colleagues to be able to do the same.

What do they say about him? "He gave me a choice. Be prepared to work 24 hours a day for as long as it takes, or look for a job somewhere else.

Some choice," grumbled one exhausted minion. Is he popular? Sir Leon Brittan's personal staff refer fondly to the Delors' cabinet as the "Stasi". Officials have been heard to refer admiringly to the "Commandant".

Why is he in the news? Lamy is leaving Brussels on 1 May, after nine years, to take up an as-yet-unspecified management post at debt-and-scandal-ridden Crédit Lyonnais, France's largest state-owned bank.

Just the man for Crédit Lyonnais. The bank's new chairman, Jean Peyrelade, says that Lamy's experience of oiling the cogs of a large multinational collegiate body should help temper its "imperialist" management style.

How does he know? In 1983 Lamy succeeded Peyrelade as deputy chief of staff to the then-prime minister Pierre Mauroy. His predecessor was evidently impressed with the results - as is Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, who has classified Lamy as a tame, "non-ideological" socialist.

What will he do? Whatever needs doing, probably. His mission in Brussels has been to steer through specific projects close to the president's heart, including a timetable for economic and monetary union, the EU implications of German unification, freer trade with central and eastern Europe and elements of the Maastricht treaty.

Will he enjoy it? Crédit Lyonnais has more than 30,000 employees, twice as many as the Commission, and a balance sheet, at Ffr2,000 billion (\$342bn), one and a half times the size of the French government's annual budget, so it should appeal to his undoubted ambitions.

Is that the end of his relationship with Delors? No. As the European Commission's Sherpa to the G7, he managed to foist Delors' strategy for employment and growth on to international partners with some success. He won't be giving up this role until after what is expected to be Delors' last G7 summit in Naples in July.

So he's staying in Brussels? No. In striking contrast to many of his peers, who are looking for permanent posts in Brussels, Lamy is, admirers say, "doing the decent thing" and leaving the Commission for fresh pastures once Delors' time is up.

And then? Conspiracy theorists say that Delors has encouraged Lamy's somewhat precipitous move to Paris as part of the advance party for his French presidential election campaign.