

I. Still talking Turkey

Commission gives Turkey green light...

Françoise Le Bail, the spokeswoman for the President of the European Commission has said that recognition of Cyprus is not a precondition for the EU to open negotiations with Turkey on 3 October. Her statement was a clear indication that Brussels is trying to distance itself from the position of the French President and Government. Following the surprising and unilateral recent statement by the French Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin, that Turkey would have to recognise Cyprus before negotiations on EU accession could start, President Chirac himself seemed to return to the theme when he told diplomats in Paris that Turkey's refusal to recognise Cyprus, an EU Member State, was "not the attitude which one expected from a candidate country". Mr Barroso's spokeswoman said that the Commission President had reminded Mr Chirac of the decision taken by the EU in December, namely that Turkey could begin negotiation without prior recognition of Cyprus. The main precondition for the opening of talks had been that Turkey should sign an agreement extending the customs union which it enjoys with the EU to the ten new Member States, including Cyprus. Turkey did this, albeit with a specific proviso that its signature on this agreement did not constitute international legal recognition of Cyprus. (Turkey refuses to recognise the Greek Government in Nicosia as the legitimate government of the whole island, recognising only the fact that it controls the South.) The spokeswoman added rather pointedly that Mr. Barroso should not have needed to remind Mr. Chirac of what the EU had agreed, since he had himself participated in the summit meeting which came to that decision. "The recognition of Cyprus is not precondition for the opening of accession negotiations," LeBail said. "Although of course any step by Turkey to end the Cyprus conflict would be extremely welcome, it is not a legal precondition." [*Die Welt*, 30th August 2005]

Although Mr. Chirac's remarks about Turkey were somewhat sour, they represent a step back from the more abrupt statement of his Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin, on 2 August. Commentators agree, indeed, that France does not intend to veto the start of accession talks on 3 October. At the meeting of ambassadors of 20 August, Mr. Chirac said that he hoped that Turkey would show evidence of a willingness to respect its obligations, while the French

Foreign Minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, said that it was impossible to imagine that a country could join the EU without recognising one of its Member States. Turkey, in other words, would have to recognise Cyprus at some point before entering, but not necessarily before the accession talks begin. In reality, however, European officials are waiting to see whether Turkey fully respects the terms of the customs union agreement, especially with regard to Cyprus, and whether she really negotiates with all twenty-five Member States in a spirit of apparent readiness to recognise Cyprus in the long term.

Commentators say that the French Government seems paralysed after the European Constitution was rejected in the French referendum on 29 May. Although the Minister for Europe, Catherine Colonna, has accused 'No' campaigners of having deliberately deceived French voters – she has pointed out that they have not produced any alternative treaty, even though they campaigned with the slogan, 'another Europe is possible' – it seems that most ministries are continuing as if France's European policy had not changed. The Ministry of Finance, it seems, is still pressing on with a campaign to press for a harmonised corporate tax in Europe, and of course for an agreement on the EU budget for 2007-2013. But neither the British presidency nor the European Commission seems particularly keen to produce a new treaty and, in any case, it seems impossible for France and Germany to take any initiatives until after the German elections in September. [Arnaud Leparmentier, *Le Monde*, 31st August 2005]

... but Member States remain divided

Clearly, the EU Member States remain divided over Turkey. The United Kingdom is strongly in favour of Turkish accession; France is more hostile. EU Foreign Ministers are meeting in Newport, Wales, to discuss the matter. They will be deciding whether to accept the framework for discussions which the Commission has proposed, and the guidelines for the negotiators. These guidelines include reference to the contentious issue of Cyprus. In addition to the well-known hostility to Turkey in France and among German right-wing politicians, a group of central European states (Austria, Slovenia, Hungary and Slovakia) want the decision to open negotiations with Turkey to be taken in conjunction with a decision to

open negotiations with Croatia. The guidelines also say that the negotiation process is open, i.e. that full membership will not necessarily be the outcome. Some states, such as Austria, want a “privileged partnership” with Turkey instead of full membership. The guidelines also indicate that the whole process can be called off if there is “a grave and persistent” violation of human rights in Turkey. [Thomas Ferenczi, *Le Monde*, 1st September 2005]

Turkey attacks Merkel and Chirac, slams ‘privileged partnership’

The Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gül, has lashed out at the idea that Turkey should settle for a privileged partnership with the EU instead of full

membership, calling the suggestion “illegitimate and immoral”. He attacked President Chirac and told him to “stop exploiting Cyprus”, i.e. using it as an excuse for obstructing Turkish accession. He gave the strongest hint yet that Turkey was working towards a comprehensive settlement on Cyprus when he said that Turkey would “not hesitate to establish relations with the new partnership state which will emerge following a comprehensive settlement on Cyprus.” Gül implicitly attacked the French President when he said, “I regret that a question as crucial as the integration of Turkey into Europe is exploited by certain circles for reasons of short-term domestic political gain.” [Yusuf Kanli & Elif Unal, *Turkish Daily News*, 31st August 2005; *Le Monde*, 31st August 2005]

II. Geopolitical manoeuvres

Putin and Chirac support permanent UN seat for Germany

The Presidents of Russia and France have said that they support Germany’s goal of obtaining a permanent seat on the United Nations’ Security Council. At the end of a meeting with the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, President Putin said, “Germany has the right to aim for a permanent seat and Russia will support her candidacy.” The Russian leader added that there would have to be a plan for the reform of the UN as a whole, and that it would have to be supported by a majority of Member States. Italy is one of the main opponents of a permanent seat for Germany. Germany’s goals were dealt a severe blow, however, when the United States rejected all proposed reforms. France supports the enlargement of the UN Security Council to include Germany, Brazil, India and Japan as permanent members. President Chirac has also said, “The reform of the UN, which has been delayed for too long, should not be enacted”. Chirac said he thought that a reasonable deadline for agreement on the reforms would be at the UN summit in September or “at the latest by the end of the year”. Chirac said he thought it was sensible to ask the states with permanent Security Council seats to give up their veto rights for the time being. [*Die Welt*, 30th August 2005]

Negotiations over the future reform of the UN are indeed entering their final and decisive stages. A core group of 30 countries and groups of countries is to present a plan for fundamental reform of the organisation in time for the summit on UN reform which is due to be held in the middle of September. The USA, which initially introduced a large number of amendments to the existing proposals, has said (through its new ambassador to the UN, John Bolton) that it will be flexible in its approach. The

group will have to come up with a plan by next Tuesday in order to meet the timetable for the summit, which is to be held from 14 to 16 September. The group is composed of the five permanent Security Council members and the representatives of regional groups. Germany is represented by the EU presidency (Britain, in this case). The fifty-three countries of the African Union are represented by three countries which speak for them; the group of seventy-seven developing countries are represented by Jamaica and Malaysia. [*Die Welt*, 31st August 2005]

Paris continues to pressure Tehran

The French President, Jacques Chirac, has again called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to end its uranium enrichment activities and to return to the negotiating table over its nuclear programme. He said that if Tehran did not do this, then the UN Security Council would have to be seized of the matter. Speaking at a meeting of diplomats in Paris, Chirac said that he hoped that Iran’s sense of responsibility would prevail and that the country would work to build confidence. For nearly two years, three states in the European Union (Britain, France and Germany) have been trying to negotiate with the Iranians, hoping thereby to score a diplomatic victory and avoid a military strike by the United States or Israel. Chirac said there was still time for dialogue, even though everyone knows that the talks between the Europeans and the Iranians have been in crisis ever since the latter rejected the former’s proposal, according to which Iran would have abandoned its nuclear programme altogether in return for a package of aid and trade cooperation. Shortly after rejecting the European proposal, the Iranians reactivated the nuclear plant at Isfahan. This caused the Europeans to cancel a meeting which had

been scheduled for Wednesday, as a protest at what they say is breach of the terms of an agreement reached last year. [*Die Welt*, 30th August 2005]

Ukraine distances itself from Russia

Ukraine has said that does not intend to participate in the Common Economic Area which was agreed on in 2003 between Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Following a summit meeting, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, said that three states would sign twenty-nine treaties between now and December, whose goal would be the establishment of the Common Economic Area. He said that Ukraine could join later if it wanted. The new Ukrainian Government is unlikely to do this, however, since its President, Victor Yushchenko, has said that he wants his country to join the European Union instead. [*Die Welt*, 29th August 2005]

German President woos Poles

The President of Germany, Horst Köhler, has visited Poland on the occasion of the ceremonies to mark the 25th anniversary of the creation of the trade union, Solidarity. He used the visit to lay the foundation stone for a brand spanking new German embassy

building in the very heart of Warsaw, situated next to the Parliament and the French embassy. (The embassy is currently divided up between three different buildings in different parts of the city, a reflection of the bad relations between West Germany and communist Poland.) The new building is to be ready by 2007. This ceremony was just one among many during his three-day state visit. The celebrations of the founding of Solidarity coincide with the ceremonies to mark the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, when Germany invaded Poland: both events directly concerned the city of Gdansk/Danzig. Köhler also distanced himself from the proposed Centre against Expulsions which the German Expellees' Association wants to build in Berlin: he said it would not be used "to make victims out of the guilty". He added, however, that good relations (between states) did not mean that one always had to agree. Köhler said that the future Ostpolitik of the European Union (i.e. relations with Russia) should not be made over the heads of the Poles, an apparent rebuke to Chancellor Schröder's forging of a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis. [Gerhard Gnauck, *Die Welt*, 31st August 2005]

III. Other European News

Southeast European energy markets to be harmonised with EU

An energy treaty is to be signed in October, which will integrate Southeast Europe's energy network with that of the EU, creating a 'single market' for the whole region. These so-called liberalisation measures are, in fact, merely a way of extending control over the energy network in the region, for the national energy legislation of the signatory states is to be harmonised with that of the EU, creating a 'single regulatory space' for energy in the Balkans. The deal is being presented as a way of stimulating growth and investment in the region, especially for American investors which are already present in Central Europe. (AES, for instance, is already in Hungary and wants to expand.) The parties to the treaty are: the EU, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Turkey, and UNMIK (the UN authority in Kosovo). The treaty calls for a number of specific steps to be taken in order to liberalise the electricity and natural gas markets: one crucial measure is elimination of the quantity restrictions on energy exports and waiver of the customs duties. Other goals include the establishment of common rules for generation, transmission and distribution of electricity and natural gas, the setting up of state-level national energy authorities, regulatory bodies and transmission system

operators, and the development of compatible state and regional market action plans. [Antonela Krstovic, *Southeast European Times*, 29th August 2005]

Energy is at the heart of much Balkan politics: a trans-Balkan oil pipeline is soon to be built across the peninsula, while chronic electricity shortages continue to plague Kosovo, even though it exports electricity. Privatisation of the state oil monopoly in Serbia-Montenegro, indeed, is a key demand being made of that country by the International Monetary Fund. Serbia and Montenegro will sign the energy agreement with the EU as two republics, because their recently created common state government does not have competence in energy matters. (One wonders what was the point of Montenegro achieving this autonomy from Serbia if it ends up supporting the same goals of EU integration.) The energy sector is one of the largest sectors of the Serbian economy, accounting for more than 10 per cent of GDP: thanks to its central position in the Balkans, the power system of Serbia is interconnected to all neighbouring countries. Over the long term, Serbia plans to 'reform' the energy sector by adopting EU principles. Montenegro strongly backs the formation of a regional energy market for Southeast Europe. Serbia is also resisting demands from the IMF to implement a radical pension 'reform'. The Serbian Minister for International Economic Relations has

said that its introduction would lead to public unrest and perhaps the fall of the Government. The IMF has made its support for Serbia-Montenegro conditional on an overhaul of the pension system and the privatisation of the local oil monopoly. Withdrawal of IMF support would jeopardise Belgrade's \$3 billion debt write-off deal with the Paris Club of creditors.

Situation declines in Kosovo

Six years after Nato's war against Yugoslavia over the Southern Serbian province of Kosovo, the situation there remains tense and precarious. Following an anti-Serb pogrom in March 2004, when nineteen of Kosovo's tiny remaining Serb minority were murdered, two young Serbs were killed in a drive-by shooting last week. They had been driving a car when another car drew alongside them and shot their wheels. When they got out to change the tyre, they were gunned down. Two other Serbs were wounded in the same attack. This attack comes just as the UN administrator of Kosovo was preparing to draw up a report on the progress of the province. A key issue is whether the Albanians are respecting the minority rights of Serbs, and it is supposedly on the basis of the UN's evaluation of this question that a decision will be taken on the province's final status, in particular whether or not it will be allowed to become formally independent of Serbia. [*Die Welt*, 29th August 2005]

Barroso warns Bulgaria

The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, has called on Bulgaria to increase the pace of its reform programme in order to qualify for EU membership on 1 January 2007. "We do not have much time," he said after meeting the new Bulgarian Prime Minister, Sergei Stanishev, in Brussels. Stanishev replied, "We are clear that there are a series of questions in which we running behind schedule." However, he tried to reassure everyone that EU membership was a priority for the new Government (which contains ministers from the old coalition, and which shares all the same policies anyway). Barroso said that he hoped that, with "great effort by the government and people of Bulgaria", the necessary "reforms" could be made in time; he said that it was not necessary only to pass laws, but also that there be an administration in place which could really implement them. The accession agreements signed with Bulgaria and Romania in Luxembourg in April contain various get-out clauses which allow the

accession of these countries to be delayed by one year if progress is deemed to be insufficient. In May, the European Commission threatened in Sofia that these clauses would be used if reforms were not undertaken more quickly. [*Die Welt*, 31st August 2005]

How the rules have changed

The European Commission has indicated that it will not seek to frustrate attempts by EU Member States to expel illegal immigrants from their territory, but that on the contrary it will help them do so. The Commission will encourage swift expulsions and will support the creation of detention centres for foreign nationals. In a proposed directive, which was presented on 1 September, the Commissar for Justice and Home Affairs, Franco Frattini, deals frankly with the question of the expulsion of illegal immigrants. The Commission suggests that countries which have a reputation for dealing with illegal immigrants firmly (i.e. France, Italy and, surprisingly, the United Kingdom) be imitated by other Member States. Brussels has suggested that there be a minimum delay of four weeks between the issuing of an expulsion order and its implementation. The British Government says that this is too long, for it wants to be able to expel people immediately. But the procedure in Germany lasts longer. Brussels says that it needs to harmonise procedures in order to prevent illegal immigrants taking advantage of the different rules in different states. The Commission says that if people have not renewed their residence permits, then they should be expelled like anyone else: according to the available figures, there are as many people in the EU whose residence permits have expired as there are people who have entered the EU illegally. The Commission says that it thinks that illegal immigrants should be detained in special detention centres, rather than in prisons. People who campaign on behalf of immigrants' rights frequently denounce such detention centres; the Commission, by contrast, is now calling on all Member States to set them up as soon as possible "in order to avoid contact between immigrants and criminals". The directive suggests that the detention period not be allowed to exceed six months. The main justification for this, according to the directive, is not so much to protect the rights of illegal immigrants but instead to reduce the cost on the public purse. How the rules have changed! [*Alexandrine Bouilhet, Le Figaro*, 1st September 2005]