

I. Talking Turkey

Last minute horse trading

Turkey has been waiting for this moment since December 1963, when the then president of the European Commission, Walter Hallstein, signed the first association agreement with Turkey. In December, Ankara expects to get the green light from Brussels for negotiations on membership to be opened. As is always the way in the EU, however, the real negotiating is left until the last minute. There has been a huge flurry, therefore, as different people within the Brussels apparatus line up on different sides of the debate.

The new president of the Commission, José Manuel Durrao Barroso, seemed to throw cold water on the issue of Turkish admission in an interview in *Le Monde*, only a few days after the commissar for enlargement, Günter Verheugen, was dropping heavy hints that all would be well. Maybe it is just part of the game – pretending that a decision still remains to be taken when in fact it already has been. Barroso says both that he remains favourable to Turkish admission, and also that Turkey has not yet fulfilled all the criteria for membership. He rejected the notion that these demands were interference in Turkey's internal affairs and said that it was up to Turkey to accept the EU's rules if it wanted to join. [Interview in *Le Monde*, 22nd September 2004]

A recent sudden sticking point has been the Turkish Government's desire to make adultery a criminal offence. Jean-Christophe Filori, the spokesman for the enlargement commissar, has stated clearly that the latest proposals are totally unacceptable to Brussels and that, without a change, the negotiations will not be opened. The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has apparently tried to remove the clause in the penal reform bill which would make adultery punishable by imprisonment, but the conservative wing of his AKP party is resisting the change. [Philippe Ricard, *Le Monde*, 22nd September 2004]

The Turkish opposition has demanded a special session of parliament in order to vote on the controversial reform proposal before the Commission publishes its report on whether or not to open negotiations. This report is due on 6th October.

The Chairman of the Republican People's Party, Deniz Baykal, said on Tuesday in Ankara that his party would call for a special session to be held on 28th September. Verheugen has said that a reform of the penal code is a condition for EU admission, and the opposition is evidently determined to do what Europe wants. The veteran CDU MEP, Elmar Brok, however, accused Verheugen of staging "political theatre", the idea presumably being that Verheugen would obtain a symbolic change to a non-existent law as a way of showing doubters in the EU that Turkey was reforming after all. Europeans are also concerned about the fact that in South-East Turkey, where their beloved Kurds are in the majority, the practice is to hand down lesser sentences for "honour killings" than for ordinary murder. Brok has demanded that the Commission put off a decision for another two or three years. He joined Angela Merkel, the leader of the German Christian Democrats, in calling for a "special partnership" to be offered to Turkey, instead of full membership. Because of these sudden tensions, Mr. Erdogan brought forward his trip to Brussels, and arrived on Wednesday evening instead of on Thursday as originally planned. [*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21st September 2004]

Erdogan's initial reaction to the demands that the penal reform be abandoned was to tell the EU to mind its own business. He said that the EU had no right to interfere in the work of the Turkish Parliament. He struck a nationalist note when he said, "We are Turks and we will decide for ourselves." He also said that he was not prepared to pay any price for EU membership. But this might be political theatre too: Erdogan has a fractious party, as the vote against the Iraq war in March 2003 showed. Maybe he calculates that a bit of grandstanding against Brussels will pacify the AKP's more conservative elements.

The Turkey issue is liable to cause a political crisis in Austria. The Freedom Party is threatening to leave the governing coalition if the government of Wolfgang Schüssel supports the opening of negotiations. [*Die Welt*, 21st September 2004]

II. Other EU news

Greek cooking

Greece has admitted that for years it provided Brussels with false statistics about its budget deficit. The Prime Minister, Kostas Karamanlis, made this admission on Tuesday, in response to a question about the record of the previous administration under Kostas Simitis, which had systematically hidden the true extent of the country's deficit. According to EU sources, it now seems that the Greek budget deficit was already over 3% in 2000, and that Greece therefore adopted the euro under false pretences in 2001. On average the real figure was 2% higher than those given. The main deception was practised when the figures for spending on armaments and social security were artificially reduced. Arms purchases were not booked until the moment of delivery, while the Government's obligations on social security were also fiddled. These two tricks were enough to adjust the reported budget deficit by some 2% of GDP. The commission has asked Athens to report on the extent and intentionality of the fraud. Prime Minister Karamanlis says that the budget deficit is now about 4.6% of GDP, way above what is permitted. The previous Government has reported a deficit of 1.7%! The Government expects the 2005 deficit to be 5.3%. 2% alone has been spent on the Olympic Games, for which the Simitis Government had reported 1.2% of GDP. The new Finance Minister is to present a new budget which will make huge cuts in spending. He is going to try to drive the deficit down to below 3% of GDP. Although the one-off costs of the Olympic Games will save him 1.1% of GDP, and although he can cut 0.5% from the deficit by raising taxes, his figures are based on a predicted growth rate of 3.9% in 2005. This seems very optimistic. And the investment bank Morgan Stanley reckons that the deficit will be 4.5% in 2005 and 5.7% this year. [Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 22nd September 2004]

Row over Competition Commissar

On 12th August 2004, when the new commission president appointed the Dutch woman Neelie Kroes as Competition Commissar, he said that one of the reasons for her appointment was that "she knows the private sector well and has good insider information". Four weeks later and it seems that her insider information is going to be a problem, not an asset. The legal service of the European Commission has issued a legal opinion on the conflicts of interest which could arise from Kroes' previous membership of various boards of directors, including Volvo, the mobile phone company MMO2 and the French arms manufacturer Thales. Although Kroes has resigned her directorships and sold her shares in these companies, the commission's legal service has said that she will have to take decisions in conjunction

with another commissar when it comes to making rulings on companies of which she has been a director. This is not the first time that Competition Commissars have had conflicts of interest: her predecessor Karel van Miert refused once to rule on the Belgian airline Sabena because his son was a pilot for it. Mario Monti had been a director of Fiat, IBM, the insurance company Generali and of Banca Commerciale Italiana. He was also a consultant for Banque Paribas, Nippon Telegraph and Bank Austria. Kroes argues that none of this affected Monti's authority, and that he was in fact known for his extreme scrupulousness in avoiding conflicts of interest: he once tried to prevent his son from studying at the university of which he was rector. But pressure is growing on Kroes. At the end of the month the commissars will have to appear before the European Parliament. Some MEPs are saying they are going to ask tough questions. Others say that hostility to Kroes derives mainly from the fact that she is known as a lover of privatisation, and that the attacks on her are therefore simply party political. [Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 17th September 2004]

Trichet attacks plans to weaken Pact

The governor of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet, has attacked proposals to weaken the terms of the European Monetary Union's Stability Pact. Trichet told the monetary committee of the European Parliament that any reduction in the deficit criteria would endanger stability. He said that to relax budgetary discipline in order to enact counter-cyclical economic policies was not a sufficient excuse for breaking the terms of the Pact. The EU had suggested a more flexible interpretation of the Pact, saying that it should be able to be broken during periods of economic stagnation and not only during a serious recession. It also suggested that extra savings be made during periods of economic upturn. Trichet said that the latest figures for European growth corresponded to the ECB's predictions. Growth is currently 0.5% in the eurozone (second quarter of 2004), having been 0.6% in the first three months of this year. Trichet said that the conditions were in place for growth to continue and accelerate in 2005. He also said that the medium-term prospects for inflation are in keeping with the requirements for stability. Although prices had risen by more than 2%, Trichet said that this was largely due to the rise in oil prices and was not part of a monetary trend. He said that the ECB expected inflation to be 1.8% in 2005. [Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 22nd September 2004]

Die Straße frei den Euro-Bataillonen

On 17th September, the EU laid the basis for the creation of a paramilitary police force to be sent

abroad on foreign interventions. The defence ministers of five EU member states – France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands - signed an agreement in the Dutch town of Noordwijk outlining their plans. By the end of 2005, a European “gendarmarie” of some 900 men will be set up for the purposes of deployment abroad. Germany is not to take part in this police force. The French Defence Minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, said that the force was half way between a military force and civilian protection. It is effectively a military police force, and the Dutch Defence Minister said that it filled the gap between soldiery and policing. The German Defence Minister, Peter Struck, greeted the initiative as “very sensible” but said that Germany would not participate, precisely because his country had to observe a “strict division” between the duties of the police within Germany and the duties of soldiers outside the country. He said that German police officers would not, therefore, be able to take part in military operations abroad. Struck said that the whole EU should decide when and where the new force should be sent. He said that possible destinations could be Bosnia or Kosovo, implying that they could be charged with the jobs there which the German soldiers had proved so spectacularly incapable of doing, namely protecting people and buildings from mobs. But he also said that Europe had a “special responsibility” for Africa: the implication there being that that continent’s problems can be sorted out with a few hundred policemen.

On the other hand, Germany will take part in the creation of EU battle groups, the first of which is to be composed of 1,500 soldiers by 2005. The EU plans to have ten such units by 2007. The idea is based on an initiative of France, Germany and Britain. Struck said that Germany would create such a battle group with the Franco-German brigade by 2007. It is also planned to create ones with the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Austria. Struck said that these units could be deployed within 6,000 kilometres around Europe.

In December, the EU is to take over the running of the Nato mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. That mission is currently composed of some 7,000 soldiers. The EU has promised not to reduce this figure. It will use Nato for operational purposes.

France and Belgium have blocked an initiative to give Nato a role in training in Iraq. The plan was to send some 300 Nato officials to Iraq. [*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17th September 2004]

German far right parties want to enter Bundestag
Following their success in regional elections in Saxony and Brandenburg, Germany’s two far right

parties, the DVU and the NPD, have announced their intention to campaign together at the next general elections in 2006. Parties from the far left and the far right drove down the score not only of the incumbent Social Democrats but also the opposition Christian Democrats. But it has naturally been the far right’s success which has attracted all the attention and caused much hand wringing. In Brandenburg, the Social Democrats got 31.9%, 7.4% less than in 1999, while remaining the biggest party in the region. The Party of Democratic Socialism (the successor of the former Socialist Unity Party, i.e. Communists) got 28% and the Christian Democrats 19.4%. The far-right German People’s Union (DVU) got 6.1%, which gives them 6 seats in the 88-seat regional parliament. In Saxony, the Social Democrats got a catastrophic 9.8%: although this was only 0.9% less than in 1999, it was only a whisker ahead of the far-right NPD (National Party of Germany), which got 9.2%. This will give the NPD 12 out of the 124 seats in the regional parliament, the first time it has been in the Saxon parliament. The CDU got 41.1%, but this is a huge 15.8% less than in 1999. Moreover, this is the first time that the CDU has won less than 50% in Saxony since 1990. It will probably have to form a coalition with the SPD in Saxony because its natural allies, the FDP liberals, did not do well enough to form a majority. The PDS got 23.6% in Saxony, 1.4% more than in 1999. Since 1989, the DVU has had seats in the regional assemblies in Bremen, Schleswig-Holstein and Saxony-Anhalt; since 1999, it has had five seats in Brandenburg.

The two parties, DVU and NPD, have now said they will contest the general elections together. The chairman of the NPD, Udo Voigt, said that the goal was to have “a strong national party” in parliament. “We have seen,” he said, speaking in a bar called ‘The Wolf’s Lair’, “that the key to success lies in having only one national party on the ballot paper.” The goal of his party, he said, was to overcome “the liberal capitalist system of the federal republic” and to abolish the multicultural society. The main candidate for the NPD in Saxony, Holger Apfel, said that it was a source of hope that the two parties were prepared to work together. Meanwhile, the office in Saxony for the Protection of the Constitution, i.e. the German secret police, have said they are keeping the new NPD deputies under surveillance because “the party recognisably pursues extremist goals”. Apfel, for his part, has said that he will send his deputies to the commission which oversees the work of the Verfassungsschutz. The NPD was very nearly banned two years ago, but the attempt – initiated by the Government - failed. (It failed because it turned out that some of the leading people in the party were themselves informers for the

Verfassungsschutz.) Now it seems unlikely that another attempt will succeed. [*Die Welt*, 22nd September 2004]

Fischer says good chance for German UN seat

The German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, has said that he thinks the chances are good that Germany get a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, within the framework of a general reform of that institution. "If the Security Council is enlarged," he said, "we will be in it." He was speaking on the margins of the meeting of the UN general assembly in New York. He added that if the Security Council was not enlarged, then world crises would be very difficult to manage. He said that the Iraq war had shown that only the UN had the legitimacy to deal

with world crises. Fischer added that he was not saying that the reform of the UN had to be "now or never": if there were no reform next year, it would come anyway, sooner or later, under the pressure of crises. Speaking in the debate on Kosovo, Fischer also said that the province had to be judged democratic before its final status could be decided. Fischer said that the key points were minority rights – pretty rich, considering that the minorities there have been destroyed by successive waves of ethnic cleansing, conducted by Albanians against Serbs and gypsies – and the creation of effective administrative structures. He said that the key thing was for the Serbs to take part in the parliamentary elections on 23rd October. [*Handelsblatt*, 21st September 2004]

III. Other European News

Primakov boycotts Hague

The former Russian Prime Minister, Yevgeni Primakov, has attacked the decision by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to impose a defence lawyer on Slobodan Milošević. In a statement issued on 21 September, Mr. Primakov said that he will not appear as a defence witness, as he had initially agreed to do. Mr. Primakov says that the decision is a direct violation of the letter and spirit of international law, and that he will appear as a witness only when the defendant's rights are restored to him. Mr. Primakov thus follows the decision taken by Nikolai Ryzhkov, the former Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, as well as by a Russian general. Following the decision to impose counsel, only a few defence witnesses have appeared. The trial has now been adjourned to allow the imposed counsel, Stephen Kay QC, more time to prepare his case. Kay has also appealed against the judgement imposing him as counsel, on the grounds that the defendant has the right to defend himself. Milošević, who demands that right, has refused to instruct Kay and says that he does not represent him. So it is difficult to see how the trial can continue. [For a summary of the legal position on the imposition of counsel, see the report by the British Helsinki Human Rights Group, <http://www.oscewatch.org/LatestNews.asp?ArticleID=47>]

Struck admits German army failed in Kosovo

The German Defence Minister, Peter Struck, has said that there was a failure of communication between the Nato-led forces in Kosovo and the United Nations

police during the anti-Serb pogroms on 17 March in which over 30 Serbs were murdered. He was speaking at the beginning of an enquiry into the matter which is being conducted by the Bundestag. The German soldiers stand accused of doing nothing to prevent the Albanian mob from rampaging through their sector in South-West Kosovo, and Struck says that this is because they failed to understand the gravity of the situation. "Soldiers are just people," he said, insisting that what happened was an honest mistake. (Some accuse them of actively colluding with the rioters, see <http://www.oscewatch.org/CountryReport.asp?CountryID=20&ReportID=218>.) The debate about the pogrom has been inflamed in Germany because the German army initially hid the fact that there had been a death in the German sector. A ministry report has now "found" that the German soldiers were not "mentally prepared" for a murderous mob, and that this is why they did nothing to stop it: one wonders what they were prepared for. Struck has said that in future the soldiers will be given tear gas but this is shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. Over 1,000 Serbs fled the pogroms and Struck himself has used the event and its after-effects to argue that the international community's so-called attempts to preserve multi-ethnicity in Kosovo has failed and should be abandoned. [*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22nd September 2004]