

# Lisbon limps onto statute book

The European plot thickens for **Lord Hannay** as peers pass the EU Treaty Bill



Lord Hannay of Chiswick is a crossbench peer

**THURSDAY** Very much a 'morning after the night before' feeling, after yesterday's vote on an amendment to the EU Treaty Bill calling for a referendum was defeated with a majority of 62. Will it be plain sailing at the third reading next week, or will the Irish referendum put a spoke in the wheel?

A quiet morning in the EU sub-committee taking evidence on the current review of the 2003 European security strategy.

**FRIDAY** With the UN secretary general in town, I chair a public meeting of the UN Association at the Royal Geographical Society's prestigious headquarters in Kensington to enable Ban Ki-moon to set out his thinking on the way ahead. This he does well, focusing particularly on climate change, and answering frankly tricky questions on Burma, Zimbabwe and human rights abuses by UN peace-keepers.

It is Ban's birthday and he seems pleased to have it recognised; also to receive from the RGS a framed photograph of Seoul in 1897 (once he realised that it was not, as he first thought, a photograph of Jerusalem). News of the Irish rejection of the Lisbon Treaty comes through as we are meeting – nothing but trouble ahead.

**SATURDAY** Another weekend day sacrificed to duty. I go to Cambridge to talk to the Eastern region of the UNA about Britain's role at the UN.

**SUNDAY** At last a nice, sunny day spent in the garden, mowing the lawn and dead-heading roses. We have my youngest son, Alexander, to lunch. He gives me a strong (negative) steer on 42 days detention.

**MONDAY** Statements in the House on Afghanistan, the funding of political parties and the Irish referendum result. The latter provides a curtain-raiser for Wednesday's third reading debate and vote on the EU Treaty Bill. The Conservative front bench unveils its proposal for postponement of a decision, supported by a number of not-very-convincing arguments designed to conceal their real aim of driving a stake through the bill's heart.

The government, supported by the Liberal Democrats (and me), argue for completing the legislative process without more ado. Then a lecture by, and dinner for, the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees. Antonio Guterres is a remarkably fluent and persuasive speaker, discussing the human tragedies of which his daily work consists, with imagination and sensitivity.

**TUESDAY** Morning meetings with an intelligent Irish PhD student doing a thesis on the Cyprus problem; and with representatives of the Kurdish community in London, who reveal the quandaries of their compatriots caught between hardline Turkish-London PKK terrorists and the Kurdish region in Iraq, trying to consolidate its autonomy under the watchful, often baleful, gaze of all its neighbours.

Then intervene in a question on food supplies, arguing that the present high prices present a perfect opportunity to get rid of many food subsidies and import and export controls, thus permitting a market-driven production response to the rise in prices.

**WEDNESDAY** The final day on the EU Treaty Bill – or is it?

The day begins quietly enough with a meeting of a group of former British officials to the EU who are working, together with the European Council on Foreign Relations, on a paper about the EU's relationship with Russia, unsatisfactory so long as we allow the Russians to divide us and rule, but potentially beneficial if we can speak with one voice.

The weekly lunchtime meeting of crossbench peers is largely devoted to House of Lords reform, on which the government's white paper is imminent. There's a strong feeling of dissatisfaction amounting to anger that the front benches of all parties are discounting any options other than those for an 80 per cent or wholly elected House.

Then the last four hours of the EU Treaty Bill odyssey. The Conservatives' dilatory motion is defeated by a majority of more than 90, a good deal larger than I had expected, perhaps reflecting the balance of the debate – or, who knows, the rival attractions of Ascot. And so the bill got its third reading and will receive Royal Assent tomorrow. The end of a long chapter, but not of the story. ■