

# **BBC Radio 4 Today and “Europe” Copenhagen Summit**

**Survey 4 November 2002 – 4 January 2003**

An examination of the treatment of the coverage of the Copenhagen Summit, based on the full transcripts of the relevant broadcasts.

**Conducted by Minotaur Media for Global Britain**

## Summary

A report by Minotaur Media into coverage by the BBC Radio 4 Today programme of the Copenhagen summit on 12-13 December 2002, has found a number of serious causes for concern. The Heads of Government Summit dealt with a number of important issues about the future of the EU, including the decision whether to allow the further enlargement of the Union by the admission of 10 new countries, the application of Turkey to join, the development of the EU Rapid Reaction Force and the resolution of the division of Cyprus. Among the more worrying findings of the survey, which was based on full transcription and analysis of all items carried about the summit, were that the programme:

- ❑ Did not cover adequately the range of summit discussions and focused narrowly on Turkey's accession and the decision to allow the new countries to join. The space devoted to the summit was seriously limiting to proper exploration of the issues raised by the summit and cannot be explained by pressure on time from other stories or priorities. Further, it represented a fall from previous summit coverage - 110 minutes of EU stories during this period, compared to 137 minutes during the Seville summit in June 2002 and 322 minutes from Feira summit in June 2000.
- ❑ Carried only one live interview with a euro-sceptic about the summit against six live contributions from europhiles, a ratio of 6:1. Of the total of 18 soundbite and interview contributions, 11 were pro-EU, four euro-sceptic and three neutral. In terms of words spoken, 3,473 (83%) were from a pro-EU perspective and only 599 (14%) from euro-sceptics. This severe imbalance was not countered by tough interviewing of the europhile contributors. On the contrary, the analysis shows that Chris Patten and Jack Straw were allowed to push their interviews into territory where they were able to put their own gloss on events.
- ❑ Contained a Thought for the Day from Bishop Richard Harries that put forward straightforward political propaganda in favour of enlargement masquerading beneath simplistic scriptural analysis. This was expressly against the terms of this programme slot, and was not balanced by countervailing opinion in other editions of Thought for the Day during the summit period.
- ❑ Carried a report from Latvia which failed to take into account properly - against BBC producer guidelines - the extent of euro-sceptic feeling within the country, an omission which was more serious because of the lack of analysis of euro-sceptic perspectives elsewhere in the coverage. Specifically, the report ignored the findings of the EU's own Eurobarometer survey, which found a minority of Latvians in favour of

accession, and instead used vox pops to reflect public opinion, which did not convey the level of euro-sceptism within the country.

- ❑ Continued the editorial stance - revealed in previous Minotaur surveys - of insinuating that summit affairs are boring, and also of linking euro-sceptic views with conspiracy theory, thereby suggesting they were extreme.
  
- ❑ Failed to cover any in any depth the euro-sceptic points raised by one of the few euro-sceptic contributors, Lord Pearson of Rannoch.

## Executive summary

### 1. General points about coverage of the EU summit

The report covers the period from November 4 to January 4, with an overall analysis of the range of coverage during the period and special focus on the heads of government summit of December 12 and December 13.

- ❑ Coverage of EU affairs declined to 4.2% of total programme content, compared to 5% in the first nine-week monitoring period. This difference was the result of a rise in home affairs coverage (from 44.3% of the programme to 50.7%), but not accountable for by the reduced importance of EU events, or by especially important home news items. There were 131 separate items relating to the EU, 81 of which were feature reports and 50 brief bulletin items or newspaper reviews. This compares to 151, 101 and 50 in the nine weeks from September 1.
- ❑ In the first four weeks of the survey period, there were only 37 minutes of EU-related features. In the week of the Copenhagen summit, there were 76 minutes of EU-related coverage (amounting to 11.6% of the programme), compared to the low point two weeks previously when there had been only five minutes (0.7%) of coverage.
- ❑ European issues may have been pushed to the periphery because - unlike business news, sports news, parliamentary affairs, and reviews of the national and international press - they have no fixed slot within the Today format. Given the importance of EU-related matters, this is an area that is deserving of urgent attention. This matter is particularly pressing because, on the evidence of their infrequent appearances, the Conservative party, the only major source of euro-sceptic opinion, appears to be unwilling to tackle EU matters. In addition, many EU issues, such as CAP and institutional reform, are complex and it appears that Today's editors - without a fixed European segment or quota to fill - are falling into the dangerous trap of avoiding them, in contravention of the Charter obligation to carry wide-ranging news coverage.
- ❑ The lack of space given over to the discussion of Europe in the period surrounding the summit had a serious impact on the breadth of the debate. EU commissioner Chris Patten set out four key issues to be addressed in Copenhagen: enlargement, the ending of the division of Cyprus, the creation of a Rapid Reaction Force and Turkey's application for EU membership. Only two of these issues - enlargement and Turkey's application - were considered in any detail by Today. Although some reference was made to the future shape of the European Union, there was no attempt to

contextualise the enlargement process within Valéry Giscard D'Estaing's Convention on the Future of Europe. Applicant countries would, in effect, be voting to join the *present* European Union, but actually joining a Union altered fundamentally by this new constitution, but this was left unexplored by the programme.

- ❑ Of 115 speakers on EU-related matters, 50% were broadly pro-EU, 28% were broadly against the EU and 22% were neutral. This compared to 51%, 30% and 28% in the previous nine-week period. The balance of speakers therefore continues to be seriously skewed towards pro-EU contributors.
- ❑ The Copenhagen summit was the third most important story on the Today programme during the week in which it happened, but it commanded only 12 features and 53 minutes of airtime. It was behind the Peter Foster 'Cheriegate' story (23 features totalling 126 minutes) and Iraq (16, and 69 minutes). The week's main eight stories took only 58% of the programme, demonstrating that there was room for flexibility in apportioning the amount of time allocated to Copenhagen coverage.
- ❑ Copenhagen and EU-related affairs, over the three week period building up to and including the summit, attracted a total of 110 minutes coverage (34 feature reports), compared with 137 minutes for the Seville summit of July 2002 (43), and 322 (66) minutes during the Feira summit of July 2000. This is further evidence of a sharp decline in the apparent importance of EU-related affairs.
- ❑ A total of 25 speakers made contributions to the programme in reports directly relevant to the summit, seven of which were live interviews, and 18 pre-recorded soundbites or vox pop contributions. Of the live interviews, six were pro-EU and only one euro-sceptic (though this was from a cultural rather than political, perspective). No euro-sceptic politician was actually interviewed. Of the other contributions 11 were pro-EU, four euro-sceptic and three neutral. Of 4192 words that were spoken in contributions to the Copenhagen debate, 3473 (83%) were from those in favour of the EU and its enlargement, against 599 (14%) from a euro-sceptic perspective. If non politicians are removed from the totals, 96% of the words spoken were from pro-EU speakers and only 4% from euro-sceptic contributors.
- ❑ Detailed analysis (below) shows that the lack of euro-sceptic perspective was not compensated for by the tough interviewing of pro-EU speakers. These figures are therefore strong evidence of serious bias in allowing those with pro-EU views to dominate the programme. There was no effort to stimulate debate through incorporating the euro-sceptic perspective, apart from one interview in which the view that an Islam country should not be allowed to join the EU was explored. Of course, all

political parties are in favour of enlargement. But there are varying views within Westminster - and in the country at large - about how it should be implemented and these were scarcely touched upon, let alone properly represented.

**Individual analysis of features during the summit week**

- ❑ A report from the Czech republic (December 9) focused on child prostitution, but in raising the important issue of what would happen to cross-border controls on child trafficking after enlargement, gave MEP Gary Titley the opportunity to put forward arguments in favour of enlargement with only very limited balancing opinion from within the Czech republic. This lack of regard for euro-sceptic opinion carried forward in other reports.
  
- ❑ A report on the day before the summit (December 11) from BBC reporter Johnny Dymond simultaneously framed EU membership as an attractive goal for Turkey, suggested the relationship might be as mutually beneficial and reinforced the concept of the exacting standards required by countries hoping to join. Mr Dymond mentioned briefly doubts about the reason for Turkey wishing to join in his introduction to the item, but these were brushed aside quickly and the rest of the piece dominated by only two strands of opinion: pro-EU Turkish speakers and the standpoint of the EU itself. This severely skewed europhile report was not balanced by euro-sceptic opinion elsewhere in the coverage.
  
- ❑ A report by correspondent Tim Franks at 6.12am on the day of the summit put forward pro-EU opinion by describing enlargement as “historic” without reference to any balancing views of those within the community who had doubts about expansion. A further report from Mr Franks at 7.12am considering Poland's application to join, focused on the narrow issue of the wrangling over financial terms - rather, for example, than worries within Poland over the operation of CAP - with the result that in the interview which followed, EU commissioner Chris Patten was easily able to dismiss the concerns.
  
- ❑ The interview with Mr Patten by James Naughtie opened with a soft question about how important Copenhagen was. He mentioned four topics - enlargement, Turkey, Cyprus and the EU rapid reaction force - the latter two of which were not mentioned again in coverage of the summit, underlining the narrowness and limited nature of the reports. Mr Patten downplayed the importance of the divisions between Poland and the EU caused by wrangling over subsidies, and Mr Naughtie agreed with him that it was a “Rubik's Cube” of problems, rather than pressing about the difficulties and divisions involved, or exploring the depths of feeling about the CAP. On Turkey, Mr Patten was asked only about the “depth of feeling” against their membership, leaving him in an easy position to downplay it and to instead focus on his own perspective of why Turkey should join. In the interview as a whole, the focus on Turkey - an issue in the future - meant that more pressing concerns of the moment were avoided and downplayed.

Overall, this interview, arguably the most important during the summit, was non-confrontational and allowed Mr Patten to put forward his pro-EU views with vigour and with little challenge.

- ❑ In Thought for Day on December 12, Bishop Richard Harries put forward the view that enlargement of the European Union to include Turkey was based on an idea rooted deeply in the New Testament. He asserted: "Jesus always sought to include those who felt themselves to be included". This was straightforward political propaganda in favour of enlargement, masquerading beneath simplistic scriptural analysis. There was no countervailing view on Thought for the Day anywhere during the EU summit, and therefore this was an example of blatant imbalance, made worse by an argument put forward by James Naughtie (December 16) about the nature of Thought for the Day in which he contended that the slot was never used for political opinion, but was "about faith".
- ❑ A report from Latvia about its approach towards membership was skewed because it focused on pro-euro sentiments in the country and completely ignored the EU Eurobarometer survey which showed that only a minority of the population are in favour. In other contexts - where the Eurobarometer showed europhile opinion - it has been widely quoted by BBC correspondents. The fact that it was ignored here suggests deep bias towards europhile views. The report also broke BBC producer guidelines in its alternative use of vox pops - these illustrated primarily pro-euro and only mild euro-sceptic sentiments, despite the findings of the Eurobarometer.
- ❑ On the second day of the summit, a report on developments concluded that proceedings could "go on to the wee small hours of the morning or even worse". This was an attempt at humour, but echoed many other reports elsewhere in coverage of the EU in which presenters or correspondents have intimated that matters relating to the EU are boring. Such references cumulatively introduce into listeners' minds a bias against such material.
- ❑ An interview with foreign secretary Jack Straw, as with the interview with Mr Patten, was distinguished by its soft interviewing technique and by missed opportunities to explore areas of debate and concern. The flow was dominated by Mr Straw, who early on deftly pushed the focus on to consideration of Turkey's application. It failed to address adequately several pressing issues of the summit such as the behind-the-scenes deal between France and Germany. As a result, the exchange became instead an opportunity for Mr Straw to demonstrate his knowledge of the history, culture and geography of Turkey. The programme's stated defence of its small numbers of euro-sceptic speakers being balanced by tough interviewing of figures such as Mr Straw was

totally dispelled by this interview - he was given an easy ride, despite there being a range of tough and controversial matters to consider.

- ❑ A report from Tim Franks (December 13) containing a very brief "interview" with an Oxfam pantomime cow protesting against the EU's farming subsidies and approach to the developing world, underlined that such views were scarcely mentioned at all during the summit coverage and were never properly discussed or analysed. In this context, they were taken almost as being a joke.
  
- ❑ On December 14, the day after the summit a soundbite from euro-sceptic Lord Pearson of Rannoch which prefaced live interviews with the Danish minister for European Affairs and a Turkish MP, underlined that during the summit, the only political interviews probed in any depth had been pro-EU and pro-enlargement. In addition, Lord Pearson's remarks were badly edited, and though he did put across a number of euro-sceptic points succinctly, the final edit rendered his closing point almost meaningless. Lord Pearson's points - about the strengthening of EU power at the centre, the problems with emerging democracies in eastern Europe and the restrictive directives placed on their economies - were not explored elsewhere in this package or in other features. The live interview with the Turkish MP which followed the Lord Pearson soundbite established - in passing - that reforms in Turkey were not happening purely because of the application to join the EU. This important point was not explored here or elsewhere further, and the overall thrust of coverage was that such reforms were a side-product only of Turkey's wish to join the EU. Overall the sequence was poorly stewarded.
  
- ❑ In the sole exploration of a euro-sceptic perspective, a sequence involving an interview with Dr John Casey and the author William Dalrymple, examined Dr Casey's views that Turkey should not be allowed to join the EU because of its link with Islam. The exchange, though well constructed, underlined that this was the only interview during the entire summit coverage with a euro-sceptic perspective.
  
- ❑ Commentary during the world press review from Poland linked euro-scepticism in that country with conspiracy theory, the second time that this had happened during the survey period. This provided further evidence that the underlying BBC editorial attitude towards euro-scepticism is that it is "extreme".

## Introduction

On Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2002, Minotaur Media Tracking began a thorough and comprehensive investigation into the Today programme's treatment of European Union issues. Once complete, the project will form the most detailed independent survey of BBC news output ever undertaken.

To ensure that published reports are as current and relevant as possible, monitoring has been separated into phases. Results from the first nine-week phase (Monday 2 September - Saturday 2 November, 2002) are documented in two previous Minotaur reports, which analysed the Today programme's coverage of the Irish referendum on the Treaty of Nice and of the European Council Summit in Brussels. The second nine-week phase of monitoring began on Monday 4 November 2002 and extended until Saturday 4 January 2003. During this phase, particular attention was paid to the Heads of Government summit held in Copenhagen on December 12 and 13, which marked the end of the Danish presidency of the European Union.

Minotaur sought to establish whether the BBC's requirements of broad impartiality and fairness were met on the Today programme in its coverage of the Copenhagen Summit, and whether sufficient time was given over to the discussion of this and other European matters during this nine-week period.

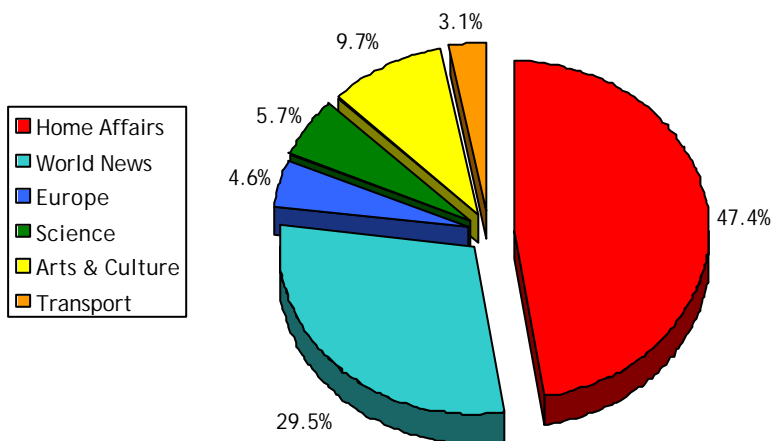
**The Today Agenda**

The proportion of the Today programme given over to the discussion of European Union issues has continued to decline. During the first nine-week phase, European Union news accounted for 5% of Today’s feature-style reports. In the second nine-week phase, discussion of EU matters had decreased to 4.2% of total feature output. This level of coverage continues to compare unfavourably to data collected during earlier monitoring projects. In the table below, the two phases of the present survey are listed alongside a similar extended project undertaken by Minotaur in May-July 2000, where 9% of feature reports had dealt with European Union issues.

Subject Area	Summer 2000	First Phase	Second Phase
Home Affairs	49.3 %	44.3 %	50.7 %
World News	17.4 %	33.2 %	25.6 %
Europe	9 %	5 %	4.2 %
Science and Environment	11.2 %	5.8 %	5.6 %
Arts, Culture and Sport	8.2 %	9.5 %	9.8 %
Transport	4.9 %	2.2 %	4.1 %

The chart below shows the cumulative subject distribution percentages for the first 18 weeks of monitoring: 2 September 2003 - 4 January 2003. The overall proportion of European Union feature reports stands at 4.6% for the survey to date.

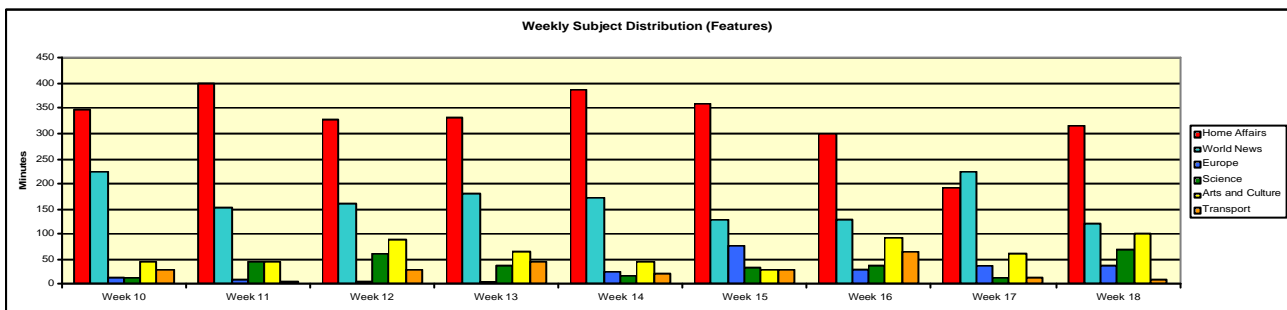
**Subject Distribution: Cumulative Total 2002-2003**



During the second nine-week monitoring phase Today transmitted a total of 131 separate items relating to the European Union. 81 of these reports were 'feature' items and 50 were brief reports in bulletins and domestic newspaper reviews. In the previous nine-week phase, there had been 151 items: 101 'features' and 50 brief reports.

### The exclusion of 'Europe'

The second phase began with very limited coverage of European Union issues by Today. During the first four weeks, there were only 37 minutes of EU-related features, the lowest recorded by Minotaur in any survey. The following chart shows the subject distribution for the second phase of monitoring.<sup>1</sup>



The peak total was recorded in Week 15, where 76 minutes (11.6%) of feature items were devoted to Europe. This coincided with reports on the Copenhagen Summit, the question of Turkey's application to the European Union and features on European Cod Quotas. The lowest level was recorded in Week 13, where only 5 minutes (0.7%) of airtime was given over to the discussion of 'Europe'. This disparity between the high and low levels, together with the four-week period of sustained disengagement from EU matters serves to highlight a central concern: the Today programme has no-ring fenced commitment to 'Europe'.

The structure of Today is such that certain types of news receive guaranteed levels of coverage. Regular sections include: Business News (14-17 minutes per programme); Yesterday in Parliament (4-6 minutes); Sports News (12 minutes); reviews of the domestic and international press (16 minutes); Thought for the Day (3-4 minutes); and weather reports (3 minutes). In partitioning these categories of news, Today ensures that each receives a constant level of coverage, which can be augmented by additional reports broadcast outside the confines of their particular slot. By contrast, European Union issues

<sup>1</sup> The totals for week 17 are not directly comparable to the others, as the programme did not broadcast on Christmas Day.

are subject to the vagaries of the wider news agenda and EU-related stories must continually compete with other types of news to earn a place within the schedule.<sup>2</sup>

Arguments for and against the inclusion of a regular 'Europe' section within Today are ultimately difficult to resolve. While this would at least guarantee a bare minimum of coverage, to ring-fence European politics would impact on the structure of Today, and perhaps influence how EU issues were covered elsewhere in the programme.

However, certain European issues have characteristics which place them at a direct disadvantage to other types of story. It is generally understood that news reporting is weighted towards the immediate, focuses on personalities rather than institutions, prefers argument to agreement and is more inclined to cover stories whose meaning is unambiguous rather than complex. Thus, long-running European issues - where movement takes place over years and sometimes decades - tend only to become 'newsworthy' when a secondary event pushes them into the agenda: for example, the publication of a particular report, a summit meeting, or an argument between politicians

At present, both the government and opposition appear reluctant to tackle European issues (and indeed, share a consensus on matters such as British membership of the EU, enlargement and CAP reform) and thus the scope for disagreement is greatly reduced. Furthermore, the complexity of these same issues could also influence their preclusion from the Today programme. Peter Preston, writing in the Observer (June 11, 2000) pointed to strong evidence that journalists do not cover stories quite simply because they are considered 'too difficult' or 'too complex'. He quoted from a US survey among journalists:

The biggest reason why stories that the people involved think we need to know about seldom see the light of day, is something still more mundane. It's because they are 'too complicated'. Fully 62 per cent of the journalists polled thought, first hand, that 'too complex' stories which had considerable 'public interest' hit the spike or the cutting room floor because they were hard to tell or absorb. Eighty-four per cent said the same about stories which were 'important, but dull'. This is not dumbing down: it is dumbing out.

These factors may go some way to explaining Today's disengagement from the Europe debate, but they do not excuse it. The slump in European coverage between the October and December summits demonstrates a need for a clear commitment to the pressing European political questions of the day, whether through the introduction of a specific

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<sup>2</sup> While the majority of these ring-fenced areas do not necessarily exclude European issues, these sections of the programme are, themselves, subject to their own internal agendas and 'Europe' must once more compete for inclusion. The 'World Press Review', for example, mentioned EU matters on just seven occasions in the 107 reports during the 18 weeks of the project to date, and in the same period 'Yesterday in Parliament' featured EU matters only twice in the course of 44 individual reports.

'Europe' slot, or through an increased commitment to European political reports across the programme generally. However this problem is addressed, it is clear that audiences ought not to be deprived access to news, interviews and analysis of crucial EU matters such as enlargement or the Convention on the Future of Europe, simply because they are complex, slow-moving or lack the impetus created by domestic political disagreement.

### Contributions

The table below lists in detail the contributions to the programme in terms of whether speakers were expressing europhile or eurosceptic views. Each interview, soundbite and vox pop was assessed and categorised according to the contents of the contribution, rather than the established views of the person concerned, or their party affiliation.

Contributions by Party	Labour	Conservative	Liberal	Green	EU	Other	Total
Pro-euro/ Pro-EU	13	3	4	0	11	15	46
In favour of specific EU legislation/action	4	0	0	1	2	5	12
Anti-euro, anti-EU or Eurosceptic	1	6	0	0	0	5	12
Against specific EU legislation/action	2	0	1	0	1	16	20
Neutral/Factual viewpoint	3	1	0	0	1	20	25
<b>Total Speakers</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>115</b>

In order to show the proportions of positive and negative sentiments, the more detailed entries in the table above have been combined into broad categories of 'Pro-EU', 'Anti-EU' and 'Neutral'.

	Phase One	Phase Two	Cumulative
<b>Pro-EU</b>	52%	50%	51%
<b>Anti-EU</b>	31%	28 %	30%
<b>Neutral</b>	17%	21%	19%

The results demonstrate a continued bias towards pro-European sentiment and attitudes within the contributions to the Today programme, during both the first and second monitoring phases, and cumulatively for the eighteen weeks of the project to date.

## The Copenhagen Summit

On December 12 and 13, 2002, European Union leaders gathered in Copenhagen for the biannual Heads of Government summit. The meeting marked the end of Denmark's tenure of the rotating EU presidency, before the office passed to Greece.

In an interview with the programme on December 12, Chris Patten, European Commissioner for External Affairs, stressed the 'historic' nature of the meeting in Copenhagen, and set out the four issues to be addressed at the summit. He cited them as: the enlargement of the Union itself by ten new countries; the possibility of ending the 28-year long division of Cyprus; the prospect of unblocking the attempts to create a European Rapid Reaction Force and finally, 'our relations with Turkey which, in a geo-strategic sense, go to the heart of the relationship between Europe and the Islamic world.'

Of the four themes outlined by Mr Patten, the Today programme only considered two in any detail. The question of the Rapid Reaction Force was never broached again, while the matter of Cyprus was raised just once more - in a single question to Danish Foreign Affairs Minister, Bertel Haarder who said that talks on Cyprus had not failed, as discussion had taken place under the United Nations rather than the EU. The two remaining issues - the enlargement of the Union, and Turkey's application - were covered by the programme over an eight-day period (Monday 9 Dec to Monday 16 December) and featured in seventeen separate reports. Of these, four were bulletin reports, one was an item in the religious affairs slot 'Thought for the Day' and twelve were feature-style reports, including reports from correspondents and interviews with politicians and other guest speakers. These feature reports amounted to 53 minutes of airtime in total.

To contextualise the programme's coverage of Copenhagen within the wider news agenda, all news stories which formed the basis of three or more feature reports were logged and timed. The main stories broadcast by Today during the eight-days of summit coverage are listed in the table below.

<b>Main Stories: Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December to Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2002</b>			
Story	Number of Features	Total Airtime	Average length of feature
Cherie Blair and Peter Foster	23	126 min	5 min 28 sec
Iraq	16	69 min	4 min 18 sec
Copenhagen Summit	12	53 min	4 min 24 sec
Pensions	5	15 min	3 min
Terrorism	5	14 min	2 min 48 sec
Foundation Hospitals	4	17 min	4 min 15 sec
Government Road building	4	17 min	4 min 15 sec
Heseltine Calls for IDS resignation	4	16 min	4 min

These totals show that the Copenhagen Summit was considered to be the third most important story by the Today editors over this interval, with the summit being allocated less than half the airtime as apportioned to the week's main story: the allegations surrounding the prime minister's wife Cherie Blair and her financial dealings with convicted fraudster Peter Foster.

This interval was noticeably light on 'strong stories'. In an equivalent eight-day period surrounding the Irish Referendum on the Treaty of Nice, there were twelve such main items; and programme time was fairly evenly divided between these and other less newsworthy reports. During the Copenhagen summit, there were only eight strong stories, and thus a significantly higher proportion of the programme (58%) contained reports which warranted only one or two separate items. Although arguments surrounding the place of various items on the news agenda are complex, this demonstrates that there was more space than usual available for a deeper exploration of issues raised by the Copenhagen meeting, and that discussion of the summit had not been squeezed from the agenda by a wealth of remarkable or pressing stories.

Certainly, in historical terms, the amount of space given over to European Union affairs during the Copenhagen summit period was low. Surveys conducted by Minotaur Media Tracking have investigated the EU's biannual Heads of Government meetings on two previous occasions: the Feira summit in July 2000 and the Seville summit in July 2002. In each of these earlier projects Today's level of European coverage was monitored for twenty-one days: for nineteen days leading up to and including the summits, and for two days subsequently. Corresponding data was collected for an exactly equivalent period surrounding Copenhagen, and is presented in the table below.

	Total Items	Feature Reports	Airtime (features)	Speakers
Feira, July 2000	104	66	322 minutes	69
Seville, July 2002	69	43	137 minutes	51
Copenhagen, December 2002	54	34	110 minutes	50

There are some difficulties in making direct comparisons: most notably the data here relates to all European Union-themed stories during each three-week interval, rather than just to those reports directly concerned with the summit. Nevertheless, the information collected during the earlier Heads of Government meetings provides a useful benchmark against which to assess whether EU stories were considered adequately in December 2002 - both in summit-specific coverage and across the broader news agenda.

The analysis which follows suggests that the comparative lack of space allocated by Today was not sufficient to address properly the central issues arising from the summit, or to allow each side of the argument equal hearing.

## Contributions to the Copenhagen Summit Coverage

In total, 25 guest speakers made contributions to the programme in reports related directly to the Copenhagen Summit. Seven of these contributions were live interviews, and eighteen were pre-recorded soundbites or vox-pop contributions. There was a substantial inequality in the proportions of 'for' and 'against' speakers on EU issues within Copenhagen Summit reports. This bias towards pro-EU opinion was even more pronounced than in the differential observed for the nine-week phase as a whole.

During the summit, listeners were more than three times as likely to hear a Europhile speaker as they were a eurosceptic. In terms of live interviews, the ratio was 6:1 in favour of pro-Europeans. Seventeen speakers contributed to the discussion from a pro-European perspective or spoke in favour of Turkey's application to become a member of the European Union. Five spoke from a eurosceptic or anti-EU perspective, or spoke against Turkey becoming a member of the European Union. Three spoke from a neutral perspective.<sup>3</sup>

	Interviews	Soundbites	TOTALS
Pro-EU/In favour of specific EU legislation or action	6	11	17
Anti-EU/Eurosceptic/Against specific EU legislation or action	1	4	5
Neutral or factual viewpoint	0	3	3

Of the seven live interviews, only one guest offered a sceptical perspective, and this was limited to a cultural rather than political argument: Cambridge academic Dr John Casey, who spoke against Turkey's EU application on the basis of historical divisions between Islam and Christianity. In contrast, the programme interviewed six guests with Europhile opinions. One historian countered the cultural arguments put forward by Dr Casey, and five other guests (Labour MEP, Gary Titley; European Commissioner, Chris Patten; Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw; MP for Istanbul Egemen Bagis; and Danish Minister for European Affairs, Bertel Haarder) presented pro-European political arguments without an equal and corresponding counterweight.

To place this inequality in its starkest terms: 4192 words were spoken in total by contributors to the Copenhagen debate, through interviews and soundbites. 3473 of these

<sup>3</sup> A further four speakers have been excluded from the totals as their brief contributions were unrelated to the European debate, and used simply to provide 'colour' to reports (for example, a Turkish woman explaining that crowds at a Copenhagen fair were enjoying the beer she was serving).

words (83%) came from those in favour of the EU, its enlargement or Turkey's application to become a member.<sup>4</sup> Only 599 words (14%) came from those with an opposing view. The remainder were neutral. If political speakers (British politicians, government representatives from Europe, Turkey and the accession countries, those speaking on behalf of the European Commission) are taken in isolation, the inequality was even more pronounced: 96% of words spoken came from pro-Europeans and just 4% presented a eurosceptic opinion.

The BBC's criticism levelled at the use of such statistical data - 'analysis by numbers' or 'bean counting' - is that breaking an interview into its constituent parts disregards essential parts of its overall dynamic: that a speaker given time to explain a specific topic is 'put on the spot' by the interviewer, and therefore balance is achieved. Certainly, it is not inherently beneficial for a guest to be allocated more airtime: if an interview is conducted in a particularly robust or combative manner then the extra space may at times be detrimental rather than beneficial. Yet - as shall be explored further in due course - interviews surrounding the Copenhagen Summit were emphatically not characterised by aggressive or confrontational exchanges between presenters and guests. It is therefore not possible to discount this imbalance between speakers as unimportant.

The disparity between the time and space given to pro-EU and anti-EU speakers was not adequately countered by tough questioning, or by presenters playing 'devil's advocate'. Even if such robust interview techniques had been employed, the input of the presenters and correspondents is ultimately no substitute for the participation of eurosceptic or anti-EU interviewees. To ensure a balanced and wide-ranging debate, europhile and eurosceptic guests must be questioned at equal length over time and with a comparable degree of vigour. But, during the Copenhagen Summit - and indeed, over the eighteen weeks of the project to date - the Today programme demonstrated a consistent and fundamental bias towards pro-European speakers.

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<sup>4</sup> This total excludes 454 words spoken by the Bishop of Oxford in favour of Turkey's application during *Thought for the Day*, as his contribution was not under the programme's direct editorial control.

## The Summit in Detail

Over the eight days of summit coverage, the programme divided its attention almost equally between the issue of enlargement and the question of Turkey's EU application. Of the 53 minutes of feature items on the Copenhagen summit, 26 minutes were devoted to the issue of enlargement and 27 minutes were spent discussing Turkey's EU application. The two issues were often treated in parallel, with reports and interviews discussing both themes simultaneously.

### Report from the Czech Republic

The week of the summit began with a report from the Czech Republic on December 9. This was the first Today item in six weeks to mention an accession country or broach any of the issues of EU enlargement. The programme had ignored these matters since October 28, when a bulletin item following the Brussels Enlargement Summit reported that accession country representatives would meet to hear the financial terms offered for EU entry.

The report was focused on child prostitution, with EU enlargement mentioned as having a bearing on efforts to clamp down on the vice trade. It hinged on a piece of investigative journalism undertaken by a BBC reporter, who had been offered sex with children as young as nine. The greater part of the package dealt with child prostitution in a town close to the German border, and featured soundbites from a British policeman, a German journalist and the town mayor. Towards the end of the piece emphasis shifted onto the wider issue of EU enlargement and the impact this might have on child prostitution. First, a soundbite from German social worker Catherin Schauer raised concerns that, after the Czech Republic joined the EU, there would be a more relaxed border regime, leading to paedophiles finding it easier to take children home with them to Germany or even traffic them. This was followed by a brief interview with Labour MEP Gary Titley, who was questioned on some of the points raised by the location report. The four questions put to Mr Titley were relatively soft, (including 'what should the EU be doing about this?' and 'are you satisfied that the EU is doing as much as it can?') which allowed Mr Titley adequate space to answer the concerns regarding child prostitution, but also to present a case for the benefits which he felt enlargement would bring to the accession countries. He said that during preparation for EU membership great emphasis was placed on making sure corruption was dealt with, and spoke about the 'huge improvements' in the accession countries regarding the way they administer their law. When asked to address the point made by Catherin Schauer, he explained that with a reduction in border controls there would be an increase in police controls and an increased cooperation between police forces and criminal systems to prevent people-trafficking. He concluded by saying that 'once the Czech Republic becomes part of the EU, it will be expected to take on our standards'.

The report from the Czech Republic looked at only one very specific implication of European Union enlargement: it was primarily concerned with the issue of child prostitution itself. Had it not been for the point raised by Catherin Schauer and the subsequent interview with Gary Titley, the report would have been categorised as a social rather than political feature, and not dealt with in this analysis at all. With enlargement used only as a backdrop, criticism of the report itself is somewhat limited: its purpose was not to address the finer details of EU expansion but to bring to light a particular social problem in the Czech Republic. Nevertheless it did raise two key concerns:

Foremost, it allowed Gary Titley to put forward a number of political arguments on the positive implications of EU enlargement without any balancing political comment. The notion of applicant countries making improvements in policing and justice, eradicating corruption and 'taking on Western standards' was to become a strong subtext during summit reporting - especially in terms of Turkey's application. But there was neither space here to challenge the political views of Mr Titley, nor to look at any negative implications for the accession countries, as the terms of the debate were so narrow. Second, as one of only two location reports from accession countries during the summit week, the package demonstrated the programme's unwillingness to tackle the matter of enlargement and its implications head on. While the Czech Republic report certainly had a rightful place within the programme, it demonstrated the need for additional reports looking at enlargement issues from a far wider perspective. Of course, Catherin Schauer's concerns had been raised, and as such the issue of the problem of border controls had been flagged to listeners. But Geoffrey Titley's pro-EU rhetoric far outweighed the problem exposed by Ms Schauer.

### Turkey and the EU

On December 11, the morning before the summit, the programme broadcast a report which considered Turkey's application for European Union membership, and posited the argument that Turkey could 'actually end up being the saviour of the EU'. The contention here was that the country, with 60% of its population under the age of 30, could 'keep the ageing economies of the EU on its feet'. BBC correspondent Jonny Dymond assessed this argument with a three-minute report from Istanbul.

Mr Dymond began by recalling the words of an unnamed European diplomat: that Turkey was 'too big, too Muslim, too poor' for EU membership - a perspective which many Turks suspected were behind the 'highfaluting talk about human rights'. But, said Mr Dymond,

other Turks were more confident that their country had something Europe needs: 'To be blunt: Turkey is young and Europe is old.'

This hypothesis was supported with a soundbite from the chairman of Turkey's Young Businessmen's Association, who said that that Europe would need young people and Turkey would sort out this problem. Mr Dymond then provided statistical information on Turkey's age structure and introduced a Turkish economist and demographer, who said that he felt the country's age structure could be an advantage, provided that the average level of education and skills could be 'significantly improved'.

Education, said Mr Dymond, was 'where it all falls down', with many children not staying in school long, and many not learning much in the way of skills. Next, came a contribution from Hansjorg Kretschmer, the European Commission's representative in Turkey, who supported this view. He said that the 'relatively badly-educated young people' and 'high levels of child labour' were more a matter of concern, rather than Turkey being seen as a potential asset to the EU. Mr Dymond, in his conclusion, echoed this viewpoint:

It would be nice for Turkey to go to Copenhagen with something more to offer than an outstretched hand, but it will take a long time before its creaking education system can be improved, so that it can turn its young population to the country's and to Europe's advantage.

The report simultaneously framed EU membership as an attractive goal for Turkey, suggested that this relationship might be as mutually beneficial, and reinforced the concept of the exacting standards required by countries hoping to join the union. The sole negative element came in Mr Dymond's introduction, in which he raised suspicions over the true motives behind Turkey's delayed accession. But this was brushed aside quickly, and the remainder of the feature was dominated by only two strands of opinion: pro-European Turkish speakers and the standpoint of the EU itself. As in the report on child prostitution in the Czech Republic two days earlier, the terms of the debate were so narrow as to preclude speakers with a more sceptical attitude towards EU enlargement, whether British commentators or Turkish people themselves.

Of course, reports cannot always maintain a strict balance between speakers. When certain questions are discussed, it is not always appropriate to maintain an equal balance between pro-European and anti-European opinion in the confines of a single report: it is perfectly legitimate to explore the differing opinions which exist among those who hold broadly similar viewpoints and the same overall objective. But conversely, it is vital that over the course of coverage more generally, all sides of complex debates are afforded equal hearing and consideration. During coverage of the Turkey debate this did not occur: only one contributor spoke against Turkey's application (based on a cultural rather than

political argument), none spoke against the principal of enlargement, while eight speakers were in favour.

The issue of Turkey's application was important, and was given additional impetus during this period by concerns relating to the wider news agenda: the country's strategic importance for possible military action against Iraq, and the ongoing debates surrounding Islam and Christianity following September 11th and subsequent terrorist alerts and attacks. However, listeners heard more about Turkey's membership - an issue to be decided two years' hence - than the immediate enlargement issues on the agenda at Copenhagen. Many of the key points of summit business were pushed well into the background, or not mentioned at all.

### The Copenhagen Summit

The first day of the summit, December 12, began with a brief bulletin item setting out its agenda: 'to agree the biggest expansion in the organisation's history', with 'last minute haggling over farm subsidies' being the 'final obstacle to a deal'. This was augmented at 7am with a correspondent report, and at 8am with a soundbite lifted from an interview later in the programme, with EU commissioner Chris Patten.

The first bulletin was followed at 6.07am by a discussion between presenter James Naughtie and Europe correspondent Tim Franks. Mr Naughtie began by asking about the mood in Copenhagen, to which Mr Franks responded:

Well it's enormously expectant, Jim, and it is a ghastly overused adjective, but the people who have come here to try and sort out enlargement believe it is an historic project, because they are talking about the unification of the east and western Europe, not just settling something that went into abeyance after the Second World War, and the descent of the iron curtain, but they're talking in much grander terms than that.

He said the Polish prime minister had referred to enlargement as 'the third great moment in Polish history' after the arrival of Christianity and the country's union with Lithuania. Although Mr Franks qualified these points by referring to them as the opinions of individuals - 'the people who have come here', 'the Polish prime minister' - the perspective presented was strongly europhile, framing enlargement only in their terms. And by the end of his opening response, the description of the summit as 'historic' had moved from being the reported opinion of the attendees to being the opinion of Mr Franks himself, who could 'understand' why the word was being used:

So if you're talking in those sort of scales, you can understand why 'historic' is a word that is being bandied around.

This problem is clear: the very scale of the European Union is such that many of its actions are of historical importance, but the term 'historic' is at odds with the viewpoint of those who might feel that these developments in the EU are 'worrying', 'troubling' or 'historically disastrous'. While Mr Franks was at liberty to report the mood of the summit in such terms, the passage underlined how easily lines between pro-EU opinion and the views of the BBC can become blurred, and its commitment to impartiality compromised.

Mr Naughtie then asked about the fundamental changes to the way the EU would operate, should talks be concluded successfully and the Union enlarged to 25 members. Mr Franks said this was an unresolved question, and set out three possible outcomes: that the EU could become increasingly diluted, with vastly different countries pulling in different directions; that the Union could be forced to pull together, integrate and centralise; or that it could 'just become a victim of its own ambition' and fall to pieces. This was a neat summation of the arguments surrounding enlargement considering the limited time available. But disappointingly, these important issues were not explored adequately elsewhere in the summit coverage, apart from single question to EU commissioner Chris Patten later in the morning.

Mr Naughtie then turned to the issue of Turkey's application. Mr Franks provided a brief background to the issue, pointing out that although he had thought the Turks were definitely going to get a date to start negotiations on EU membership, having spoken to a senior Danish official, he now felt there were 'plenty of problems, plenty of opponents inside the European Union to the Turks getting an easy path.'

#### Poland's Accession Deal/Interview with Chris Patten

Tim Franks returned at 7.09am with a report looking at the Polish disagreement with the EU over the terms of their accession package. The report remained descriptive rather than analytical - listeners were provided with an overview of summit events, with soundbites from two Polish politicians. First Mr Franks provided background information on negotiations, stating that the Danes, as presidents of the EU, had arrived in Copenhagen with a 'bit more money' - an extra billion euros - and their purpose was to engineer that the other heads of government would agree to that. But he said the Poles were 'holding out for as much as they can possibly get' and for the right to give their farmers more subsidies.

This was supported with a soundbite from Poland's chief negotiator, Jan Truszczyński who said that the negotiations were 'very tough', but this was to be expected owing to the overall economic situation being worse than was projected several years ago. The next

soundbite came from Polish Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, who, said Mr Franks, had exhibited what 'seemed to be real anger' over the deal. But the soundbite chosen to illustrate this was not overtly critical of the EU, instead focusing on the 'heritage of the iron curtain', the stifling of the country's capabilities and talents, and making the point that 'Polish people are not responsible for being poorer, living in worse conditions and so on.'

Mr Franks concluded by highlighting the dichotomy at work within the negotiations:

The problem, for the Poles, and the ministers acknowledge this, is that if they stamp their feet too hard here - and shout about what a lousy deal they're being offered, and they end up having to accept it pretty much, then it's going to be all the more difficult to sell the deal back home in the referendum on membership of the European Union next year.

There was little intrinsically wrong with this report: its purpose was simply to outline events at the summit, and it did so adequately. But when assessed in the wider context of Copenhagen reporting, it demonstrated how little consideration was given to concerns such as those of the Polish farmers, the implications of the Common Agricultural Policy on a union of twenty-five member states, or the impact of enlargement on the accession countries more generally.

With the Polish farming issue remaining a backdrop, the financial wrangling itself took centre stage. As a consequence, Chris Patten was able to dismiss the dispute easily when he was questioned later - this was, after all, the business of summits and there was little to suggest that the dispute might ultimately stall the accession process - whereas if the introductory report had focused more squarely on the issues at stake, this interview may have been altogether more taxing.

Back in the studio, James Naughtie introduced EU external affairs commissioner Chris Patten. The first question was soft: 'How important is what happens in Copenhagen over the next couple of days?' Mr Patten responded, not unexpectedly, that the summit was 'Extremely important. There are four issues that come together at one time, which means that I think the word 'historic' isn't being overdone on this occasion.' He then outlined the four issues: enlargement, the possibility of ending the division of Cyprus, the unblocking of attempts to create a Rapid Reaction force, and the EU's relations with Turkey. He then moved to downplay any divisions between the EU and Poland caused by the wrangling over subsidies,

I think there's a huge amount to play for, and what you've just been talking about in relation to Poland is just a relation of the fact that these are negotiations and the toughest thing in negotiations is always money.

Mr Naughtie agreed with his guest:

Well, of course, they're multifaceted negotiations, aren't they - I mean it's a sort of Rubik's Cube of negotiations.

To which Mr Patten replied. 'That's a very good way of putting it.' Clearly, the dialogue here was not robust or confrontational - the two men were developing a shared viewpoint on the summit proceedings, and reaching a consensus. Mr Patten then explained at some length the terms being offered to Poland, that he felt the European Commission was being prudent in its financial proposals for the ten new members, and that he expected a deal to be reached 'some time in the middle of the night on Friday'.

Mr Naughtie responded, in reference to the prospect of a late night deal, 'Yes, some things don't change' and then moved on to the subject of Turkey's application. He asked Mr Patten how strong he felt opposition to Turkey's application was inside the EU. Again this was a weak question, asking for Mr Patten's perspective on the matter, rather than challenging his own opinions, or the policy of the EU generally. However, a number of the points raised by Mr Patten during this section had particular relevance to the Today programme's handling of the enlargement debate.

Well, I think that the most worrying aspect about all this is we haven't really had a debate... And I think it is not necessarily a good thing that at the same time we're debating the impact of the enlargement of the ten, some people will be seeing that in the context of a further enlargement to Turkey.

This comment pinpointed the principal problem with Today's coverage of the Copenhagen Summit. As has been documented previously, attention was repeatedly diverted from the present round of enlargement to an event some years the future. Taken in isolation, the issue of Turkey's EU application was given adequate hearing by the programme, but with other summit coverage so minimal, the theme came to overshadow other more immediately significant issues.

Mr Naughtie's final question was meandering. Rather than playing 'devil's advocate' and - for example - putting forward clear eurosceptic concerns regarding enlargement, he instead outlined two opposing arguments and asked Mr Patten where 'the balance will lie' between the two perspectives.

Let me ask you finally, Mr Patten, where you believe the balance will lie between the argument that says the EU will become looser, more flexible, to some degrees more informal as it gets bigger; and, on the other hand, the argument that because of the chaos that that might produce, it might actually become more centralised as it gets bigger.

The query was indirect, and allowed the commissioner to brush aside eurosceptic concerns relatively easily, while setting out the European Union perspective clearly and without interruption.

Well, I think there's always been a slightly simplistic argument that broadening the European Union was an alternative to deepening the European Union. What I think will happen is that we will be obliged to focus far more clearly on those areas where there really is a European value added, where we really do benefit from regional integration, economically and in other ways, and those things should best be done by nation states and I think that will be an inevitable consequence of an enlargement to ten new countries. A European Union of 25 is a very, very, very different creature to one of 15.

This interview - perhaps more than any other during this survey period - was non confrontational. Mr Patten illuminated what was happening from his own (commissioner's) perspective and was given clear space to say that the outlook was mainly fair. But he was given an easy ride on a difficult area of EU development on which there are many contrasting opinions. In the past, the Today programme and senior BBC executives have justified an imbalance in favour of pro-EU speakers on the programme on the ground that they are given a tough time in explaining their actions - and that in effect, the presenters put forward the euro-sceptic viewpoint. This interview - one of the crucial ones in the coverage of this "historic" summit (in the words of Tim Franks) - illustrates vividly that this is emphatically not the case.. The interview with Mr Patten was much closer in approach to the increasingly convivial discussions which take place between presenters and BBC correspondents, rather than a tough interrogation of a senior EU representative.

### Thought for the Day

The issue of Turkey's EU application was next aired during Thought for the Day on the same morning. The guest speaker was Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford, who began by setting out the possibility of Turkey's accession in grand terms:

Turkey could now become part of the European Union, and European leaders meeting in Copenhagen today may make this more likely. It's a decision with momentous implications, and I already feel the tectonic plates shifting under the surface of our history and geography.

Bishop Harries moved on to discuss the historical divisions between Turkey and Europe and suggested that 'we'll be challenged to grow beyond these historical antagonisms', and then moved on to the political questions facing the Turkey and the EU.

Of course, there are still many tough political issues to solve - not least human rights for all Turkey's minorities and the reunification of Cyprus, and theology is certainly no substitute for the hard negotiations that will be necessary.

In the next section, he set out a religious case for Turkey's acceptance into the EU.

Nevertheless, theology does, I believe, give us sympathy for the possibility of inclusion. A little rhyme goes: *he drew a circle which shut me out, heretic, rebel, a thing to flout, but love and I had the wit to win, we drew a circle that took him in.* Love seeks to draw ever wider and more inclusive circles, not narrower ones, and God draws a circle that includes the whole of humanity. It's an approach that is deeply rooted in the New Testament, where it's clear that Jesus always sought to include those who felt themselves to be excluded. But from a political point of view, the structures to achieve that all-inclusive circle can only be put in place one at a time. Enabling Turkey and all the member states of the European Union to enrich one another, culturally, as well as politically and financially, is one such step.

The arguments advanced by Richard Harries, and his attempts to draw parallels between the teachings of Jesus and the case for enlargement were unsophisticated, but were shielded from scrutiny or discussion due to the very nature of Thought for the Day: a three and a half minute monologue without interruption or challenge. Many would suggest that there are positive reasons for Turkey remaining *outside* the European Union, including the protection of its sovereignty and the safeguarding of its culture. Furthermore, it is simplistic to suppose that to develop tolerance and understanding between nations they must be part of the same political institution; or indeed that being part of the European Union has led to a lessening of antagonism between the present member states. But no space was given on the programme for such opposing viewpoints. In effect Mr Harries gave an unchallenged perspective on EU expansion - that it would bring inclusiveness, tolerance and cultural enrichment. In consequence, the unspoken opposing perspective became positioned as the inverse: restrictive, intolerant and philistine.

Four days after the broadcast by Mr Harries, Thought for the Day itself became news, when campaigners considered legal action in an attempt to allow atheists access to the slot. James Naughtie interviewed Barbara Smoker, former president of the National Secular Society, on December 16, and sections of the interview were particularly pertinent to the Bishop of Oxford's broadcast.

JAMES NAUGHTIE: Thought for the Day, though, isn't part of the comment and discussion and news on this programme, as you know, it's a completely separate slot, and it's justified on those grounds. I mean, the argument is that this is a slot about faith, now you may not like it . . .

BARBARA SMOKER: It's not, is it? Because nearly every day it's a comment on some topical issue giving a sort of ethical view . . .

JN: It's a perspective, yes.

BS: . . . then in the last thirty seconds of the slot, the person brings it down to some sort of religious parallel or something.

Later in the interview, Mr Naughtie argued:

JN: But we discuss - in a secular context - the issues of the day the whole time.

BS: Ah yes - but you don't allow non-believers to give their own head, to choose the subject, to speak just . . . it's always in the context of an interview like this, or with an opponent - it's never like it is in Thought for the Day, where the person is given their own head to give their own viewpoint.

Thought for the Day is paradoxical. As Mr Naughtie suggested, it is 'separate' from the rest of Today, its theme selected by the invited speaker, and it is compiled under the auspices of the Religious Affairs Department rather than the programme's editorial team. Yet, it is also an integral part of Today, appears seamlessly each day during the programme's peak half-hour, and is governed by specific BBC production guidelines.

The remit of Thought for the Day is to 'reflect on current affairs from a spiritual and theological perspective'.<sup>5</sup> But this can present problems. In attempting to ensure the slot is in keeping with the hard news and current affairs which encase it, there is often little to separate a religious standpoint from political comment. Richard Harries himself has said about contributing to Thought for the Day:

It's important not to be too political. Anyway, I would never put an unequivocal point of view. One would always do a bit of wrestling with people.'<sup>6</sup>

Yet, his contribution to the Copenhagen debate *did* present a clear and unequivocal case for Turkey's accession to the EU, with the only 'wrestling' being over the social and political hurdles to be surmounted before this could be achieved.

According to Tim Luckhurst, in his biography of the Today programme, 'Editors and producers rarely pay the remotest attention to what is said by contributors to Thought for the Day'. He also quotes an unnamed producer who states, 'We couldn't care less what's in it'<sup>7</sup>. Yet, the slot is important - more popular with Today audiences than the sports reports, business news and 'Yesterday in Parliament'<sup>8</sup> - and while the programme's editorial team are keen to stress that they have no control over the contents of Thought for the Day, the slot cannot be excused from the BBC's overall commitment to impartiality.

<sup>5</sup> Bates, S, (2002) 'Radio's Thought for the Day 'too bland'' *The Guardian*, 17/06/02

<sup>6</sup> Donavon, P. (1997) *All Our Today's*, London: Jonathan Cape, page 162

<sup>7</sup> Luckhurst, T. (2001)., *This is Today*, London: Aurum Press Ltd, page 117

Many of the issues surrounding EU enlargement are so complex that simple arguments such as those employed by Mr Harries, presented without challenge or debate, may actually hold more sway with listeners than reports on the intricacies of the accession process, its financing, or issues relating to the deepening of EU regulatory powers. The notion that the EU should be enlarged because it is 'good', 'ethical' or 'morally correct' could prove an enticing argument for many listeners, particularly when this case is presented without opposition.

#### Report from Latvia

The second accession country report during the summit period was at 8.47am, and was from Latvia. It opened with an intro that seemed to focus on the Latvian people's apparent doubts about Europe:

It's one of the ten candidate countries which will be taking part, over the next year or so, in the EU's biggest ever enlargement, a most complicated business. Well, how do the Latvian people themselves feel about it all?

According to the European Union's own figures, support for the EU among the Latvian public remains amongst the lowest of all the accession countries, with only 35% of those surveyed believing that EU membership would be a good thing. (*Candidate Countries Eurobarometer, November 2002, p3*). This was not reflected in what followed.

In the report, the term 'Latvian people' was used in its broadest sense: the report featured only two 'vox pop' contributions from members of the Latvian general public. The other contributors were two senior politicians and a representative from the Latvian institute. Even more surprising given the low levels of support for the EU in Latvia, not a single contributor offered an anti-EU or sceptical perspective.

The report began with an excerpt from Latvia's winning Eurovision Song Contest entry, which reporter Chris Morris said 'had done more to enthuse people here about Europe than the government ever has'. He then moved to the issue of Latvia's past links with Russia:

I'm standing in front of the freedom monument in the middle of Riga, and it gives a pretty clear idea of what it thinks freedom means. The statues facing east towards Moscow are in chains, those facing west look strong, proud, happy even. So does that mean Latvians have fallen for Brussels in a big way?

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<sup>8</sup> Donovan, P, op. Cit. page 150

Yet the soundbite used to show that this perspective was 'not quite that simple' came from the country's President, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, who dressed up public scepticism with his own pro-European views:

It's a historic opportunity that Latvia can't afford to miss. But, to tell you the truth, we do have people who are still sceptical about it, and I think this is the inheritance from being occupied by the Soviet Union and feeling a certain distrust of large structures and huge bureaucracies. But it's becoming clear that what Latvia can receive from the European Union goes beyond what we could achieve on our own.

Mr Vike-Freiberg's comments served only to downplay both the levels of euro-scepticism within his country and the arguments surrounding the distrust of EU bureaucracy. It would have been far more appropriate to include a speaker who actually had such concerns, rather than have them presented in a second-hand form by someone with pro-EU views.

The statue metaphor represented a missed opportunity: one of the central concerns underpinning left-wing opposition to enlargement is the precise opposite of what the metaphor suggested: that the 'freedom' offered by the west would in reality culminate in the exploitation of workers in the accession countries by European business and multinational companies. But while such arguments are significant in the enlargement debate, they appear to fall outside the range of what is considered 'acceptable opinion' by BBC journalists and producers, and to date, have been excluded from reports on enlargement.

Next, Mr Morris moved to a Christmas market in Latvia's old town, where he said 'opinions were divided'. The vox pop contributor said:

I think there must be done a lot of informational work, because people they do not really know what is European Union (*sic*) and I know that farmers are scared.

Just as in the Latvian president's contribution, opposition to the EU was presented second hand: although he mentioned that farmers were fearful of the EU, his own opinion was that there should be 'more informational work', and as such his contribution was neither positive nor negative towards the EU. But the subtext of his statement - that through education and information fears about the EU would be allayed - proved pivotal to the report, and formed the basis of Chris Morris's conclusion, which will be addressed later.

The second vox pop interviewee was wholly positive about the EU: She said, 'I think that it will bring some kind of safety and I think that it is very good'. The difficulties inherent to the use of vox pops are clear.. They lack the scientific rigour of opinion polls and , in the words of the BBC's own Producers' Guidelines, 'do not even remotely indicate wider public

opinion'. In the case of the Latvian report, the two contributions were perhaps even less representative. In addition, both speakers responded in English, a factor which may have had a bearing on their level of sympathy with Europe. Had Mr Morris canvassed the opinion of market stallholders or distributors rather than customers, he might have obtained soundbites which better illustrated public opinion in Latvia.

Mr Morris then asked: 'Is Latvia ready for the EU? There are certainly problems with corruption and the sensitive issue of minorities'. He introduced a soundbite from opposition politician Yanis Jurkans, a campaigner on behalf of Latvia's Russian minority. Mr Jurkans expressed a hope that 'EU membership and NATO membership will help Latvia solve this problem more than we could do on our own' - a reiteration of the belief that Latvia would benefit from accession. Mr Morris then turned to once more to the broader issue of Latvia's break from its communist past:

This country has already come an extraordinary distance in the past decade. That's why Ojars Kalnins, the director of the Latvian Institute, thinks realism will win the day, when a referendum on EU membership is held next year.

The concept here was loaded: the phrase 'extraordinary distance' equated the social upheavals in Latvia to a journey, with EU membership placed as the logical outcome of this journey for 'realists'. The two sentences formed a non sequitur, and divisions were blurred between the viewpoint of the correspondent and the beliefs of Ojars Kalnins, with the second statement dependent upon the first. Of course, although the country has moved a great distance from its communist past, it does not necessarily follow that a referendum would be won. But this sequence unequivocally presented Latvia's accession to the EU as the logical outcome of this progression.

The subsequent contribution from Mr Kalnins at least referred to present scepticism within Latvia, but qualified this with a belief that through active campaigning, the referendum would be won by the pro-EU movement.

Today they're saying, 'well things are doing well, do we really need this?' No, I think that by next year people will vote favourably, but I think a lot more active campaigning needs to be waged internally. Plus, people here are looking at how members of EU are voting on issues, when they hear the scepticism there, it's reflected here as well.

In his summation, Mr Morris adopted completely the perspective of pro-European Latvians, spoke of the benefits they believed could be achieved, and downplayed levels of scepticism within the country:

For supporters here of European integration, Christmas is coming early. They see the offer of EU membership of a guarantee of security and prosperity, anchoring them in the west. They haven't yet convinced everyone, but they think time is on their side.

Throughout the report, listeners were presented with a clear message: that given adequate education, information and time, the fears of the Latvian people could be allayed and their opinions changed, through an active campaign of education and information on the part of the country's pro-Europe lobby. But the supposition upon which this rests is precarious: that educating the populace with regards to the European Union and its institutions will necessarily lead to a more pro-European attitude. The conclusion - and the tenor of the report in general - completely avoided the alternative possibility that more information and education might actually lead to a hardening of public opinion against Latvia's membership of the EU.

Between the EU's last full *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer* survey in October 2001 and the preliminary findings of the same survey in October 2002, Latvian opposition to EU membership increased by four percentage points, while support for membership grew by just two points. While it would be improper to infer from just two polls that anti-EU opinion is solidifying more rapidly than pro-EU opinion, such surveys do show that there is a consistent level of scepticism among the Latvian population. For this to have been ignored so completely by Mr Morris in his report from Latvia - and indeed, in the summit coverage as a whole - presents serious cause for concern. In other contexts, BBC reporters have used the Eurobarometer survey to shore up pro-EU arguments. Here, where it gave strong evidence of euro-scepticism, it was completely ignored, with the reliance instead to illustrate pro-EU arguments on the wholly unscientific use of vox pops. This, therefore, was a feature which on several levels broke the BBC producer guidelines to advance pro-EU arguments.

#### Copenhagen Summit - Day Two

The second day of the summit, December 13, began with a bulletin item which reported that Turkey's hopes of early entry into the EU had 'suffered a setback', but that EU leaders in Copenhagen were close to agreeing a financial package with the ten accession countries due to join in 2004. Correspondents Chris Morris and Tim Franks added reports at 6am and 7am, while the bulletin at 8am included a soundbite taken from an interview with Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw.

At 6.07am, attention turned once more to Turkey's application, with two-minute discussion between presenter John Humphrys and correspondent Jonny Dymond. This report fleshed out the information contained in the bulletin item: namely that the Turkish government had been offered a conditional date for negotiations to begin at the end of 2004 - later

than the country had hoped - and that the Turkish government would be 'fairly disappointed with this result.' Mr Dymond proceeded to describe how there was a feeling within the Turkish government that a deal on the negotiations had been 'stitched up by France and Germany well before this summit began', before suggesting that Turkish leaders would be unhappy when reacting formally to the announcement from the Danish prime minister.

Mr Humphrys responded that, 'On the other hand, you've only got to go back a few years, and you think, my god, it was unthinkable then that they would join the European Union'. Mr Dymond agreed, and spoke about the 'fairly serious reform process that it's been undergoing for the past eighteen months' but said there would be shoulder shrugging from the 'Turkish men and women in the street', who would say 'we've had these kinds of delays before.'

A number of these themes were reprised at 6.36am, in a similar dialogue between presenter Edward Stourton and Tim Franks. The three-minute discussion was split evenly between discussion on the Polish negotiations and questions on Turkey's application. Edward Stourton began by saying the summit was 'due to wrap up today, but there's talk of it stretching into the weekend', as the financial package for accession countries was yet to be agreed. Mr Franks replied that progress had been made, and all countries accept Poland having agreed the terms set out by the EU. He added the comment that the conversation later that morning between the Danes and the Poles would be 'predictable', with the Danes saying 'there is no more money' and the Poles saying, 'well back in 1999 when you were talking about enlargement and there were just six applicant countries, you were actually going to promise us more, so cough up.' Mr Stourton asked if the Poles would accept the EU deal, to which Mr Franks replied in the affirmative, together with an aside which echoed his comments on the Brussels Enlargement Summit six weeks previously, in which he had called EU politics 'dreary'.

I was cheered to hear you say Ed that it was all due to wrap up by the end of today (*Stourton laughs*), I think it could go on into the wee hours of tomorrow morning, if not worse.

Of course, the comment was light-hearted, but nonetheless helps to reinforce the notion that European Union business is tedious. While this may be true of the meetings themselves, the issues at stake here are among the most important political questions of modern times, and to denigrate EU matters in such a way ultimately does them a disservice. It is difficult to think of any other area of news that would be referred to in this way.

Mr Franks then moved on to the 'other big story' from Copenhagen, the date given to Turkey for negotiations on its accession. Much of what followed was in a similar vein to the discussion between Jonny Dymond and John Humphrys earlier in the morning. Initially, Mr Franks provided details of the dates themselves, and then of the reform process underway in Turkey in terms of their 'human rights and democratic credentials'. He then provided details of the political response to the announcement: that the British felt that this was 'good news for Turkey', but the Turks themselves were likely to be 'bitterly disappointed' at having to wait until after the expansion of the other ten candidate countries. These points were to be raised again later in the morning, in questions put to the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw.

#### Interview with Jack Straw

At 7.33am Edward Stourton embarked upon an eight minute feature - the longest of the summit period - which began by outlining the 'two big developments' in Copenhagen, as referred to in his previous discussion with Tim Franks. There followed a brief pre-recorded soundbite from Quentin Reed of the Open Society Institute, who feared that enlargement would bring a group of countries into the EU, with a less than impressive record on corruption in public life:

Corruption is a pretty serious problem in more than half of the candidate states and maybe more. Corruption in public administration, normal day-to-day bribery in the allocation of public funds, that sort of thing. There are requirements regarding the control of allocation of EU funds, the problem is that this framework has not been particularly effective, even within the EU.

Mr Stourton then introduced the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw. Mr Straw was asked first to deal with the point raised by Quentin Reed, with the question 'are you convinced that the new members are clean enough to come in?' Mr Straw said that yes, he was convinced, and that standards of governance were higher than they otherwise would have been, precisely because of process of EU application. He then emphasised at some length that 'Europe has moved from just being a rather narrow geographical entity to become a Europe of values', and a proper market economy across Europe, something which he said was directly in the UK's interest.

Mr Stourton pushed him on this point: "saying that they're better than they would be otherwise isn't quite the same as saying they're good enough to be in the club, is it?", which prompted the following exchange:

JACK STRAW: Well, we also of course - sorry - believe that they are good enough to be in the club, otherwise they would not be being allowed to join. And I wonder if

I could just pick up a point that was raised by your newsreader, when he said that Turkey's application, quote, "would not be looked at for another two years"

EDWARD STOURTON: That's true isn't it?

JACK STRAW: That implies. . . well if I may be allowed to provide my answer Mr Stourton.

EDWARD STOURTON: Go ahead.

This marked a pivotal moment in the discussion: control had passed from interviewer to interviewee. Crucially, the answer - which Mr Straw testily requested that he might provide without interruption - was not to a question asked by Mr Stourton, but one raised by Mr Straw himself. For the rest of the interview - some seven minutes in total - the discussion dealt exclusively with Turkey's application.

Thus, the concerns raised by Quentin Reed, regarding corruption in the present group of accession countries were placed neatly aside, and Mr Straw was able to speak at length on a more positive set of issues. He talked about the pre-accession conditions which had brought about an 'engine of change for the better' within Turkey, including the introduction of constitutional amendments, the abolition of the death penalty and changes to how their market economy operates. Mr Straw was on safer ground here; the only riposte Mr Stourton could muster related to Turkey's disappointment over the late start date for negotiations - the implication here being that Turkey's accession to the EU ought to be even swifter than had been actually been agreed.

Much more productive here - and more incisive in terms of the issues involved - might have been for Mr Stourton to have questioned Mr Straw on the behind-the-scenes deal agreed by France and Germany as mentioned by correspondent Jonny Dymond at 6.07am. This was particularly important as a potential line of inquiry in the context of the similar deal during the Brussels Enlargement summit in October which had led to a row between Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac, and the subsequent cancellation of an Anglo-French summit. But instead of being put on the spot or subject to tough questioning, Mr Straw was able to reiterate three more times, that this was 'a pretty good deal for Turkey' and suggest that the agreement was reached 'thanks to the efforts of the British government, but particularly the British prime minister Tony Blair', with no intervention from Mr Stourton to the contrary.

The next question placed the question of Turkey's application in its wider context, asking how far Mr Straw's enthusiasm for Turkish membership was down to a desire to please the Americans, on the war on terrorism and more particularly in the event of war against Iraq. Mr Straw responded that Turkey's application for membership predated any possibility of

action against Iraq by twenty years, and then moved on to set out the reasons behind his support of Turkey's membership of the EU:

The reason we are doing this is because we want to see a wider Europe making up the European Union, a Europe of values. We particularly want to see a democratic, market economy, Muslim country coming into the European Union, so that the European Union is not an exclusive club of so-called Christian countries. But it goes wider than that, and after all, Turkey historically has often been seen to be mainly in Europe in any event.

From here, the discussion centred exclusively on the historical and cultural issues surrounding Turkey's application, with Mr Stourton asking what someone living in Mr Straw's constituency in the northwest of England might have in common with someone living near the border with Iraq in southeast Turkey. Mr Straw presented a number of reasons: that a third of his constituents are Muslims and thus have a shared religion with people living in Turkey and that Islam, in any case, shares prophets from Christianity and Judaism; that other countries in Europe have a Muslim heritage, including large parts of Spain; and that what happens in Turkey directly affects his constituents in terms of organised crime and trafficking.

Mr Stourton then pressed a point on the geography of the region: 'Turkey is technically not in Europe is it? A pedantic point but an important one.' In response Mr Straw provided a condensed history of the region,

But just bear in mind Turkey's history and heritage. It began as a Roman country but then was part of the Byzantium, part of that side of, as it were Eastern Christendom, before it became an Islamic country. So it's had a very mixed history. But the most important point is - and particularly since the revolution of Kemal Ataturk that people in Turkey, although they wish to respect and celebrate their Islamic heritage, think of themselves as being European . . .

Mr Straw concluded by reiterating his core messages: that the new enlarged Europe would be 'a Europe of values' and that the influence of the British government had helped secure the deal for Turkey:

. . .and I have to say that I've visited Turkey now three times in the last eighteen months, I can see exactly why they do think of themselves as being Europeans. And they also believe that becoming part of the Europe of values of the European Union is a way in which they can modernise their country and change it irreversibly for the better. So it is in all our interests to have Turkey in, and as I say this deal - which our prime minister has helped negotiate is a pretty good deal for Turkey.

Throughout its latter stages, the interview drifted from political issues and became a process in which Mr Straw paraded his knowledge of the history, culture and geography of the region. Although these considerations are important, the interview left a host of

questions unaddressed, especially relating to the issue in hand, -the current round of EU enlargement. Mr Straw is undoubtedly a tough interviewee in that he is adept at resisting attempts to be reined in, interrupted or spoken over. But stronger questions and a more robust manner from Mr Stourton would have prevented Mr Straw from exerting control over the issues being discussed, and dissuaded him from speaking at such length on background matters, rather than dealing with challenging or demanding political issues.

#### Report from Copenhagen

At 8.41am, Tim Franks delivered a location report from Copenhagen. The feature was "impressionistic" in attempting to provide listeners with a flavour of events in the Danish capital. The soundbites in the piece added colour to the report rather than making any direct political points.

The report commenced by addressing another matter entirely: the week's main story regarding Cherie Blair and convicted fraudster Peter Foster. Mr Franks began, 'And there you were, thinking this was about the expansion of the European Union,' followed by a soundbite from Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith, in which he called for the prime minister to deal with the Cherie Blair matter today, or face the whole conference being overshadowed by a domestic crisis.

Mr Franks explained that Mr Duncan Smith had come to Copenhagen to meet European Conservatives, then added that his concerns over the Blair/Foster saga did 'not seem to affect the candidate countries, whose representatives were congregated in the city's town square, with girl choirs, free pens, gingerbread and honey'. The next soundbite came from an Estonian woman who said 'This is a good chance to show the people of Denmark that we are not some bad people, from cold countries, who don't care'.

Mr Franks said the Turks were taking no chances on being viewed in such a way, and were handing out free beer. A woman on the Turkish stall explained that everyone seemed to like her beer. 'Well, maybe not everyone,' said Mr Franks, explaining that some believed that 'this huge, poor, Muslim country will be the death of Christian Europe'. He added that Valerie Giscard D'Estaing, head of the Convention on the Future of Europe, had recently said that letting in Turkey would be a disaster. There was then a soundbite in French from Mr Giscard D'Estaing, with Mr Franks adding : 'That's French for *je ne regrette rien*'. He continued:

But if he sees catastrophe ahead for Europe, the charity Oxfam is warning of catastrophe for the developing world, thanks to the EU. They brought a pantomime cow to Copenhagen to make their point.

Mr Franks asked an Oxfam representative, 'Does this actually moo?' To which he replied, 'Yes it does over from a tape player to the right I think.' Mr Franks elaborated, explaining that Oxfam believed that the EU had done nothing to fix its 'fabulously expensive system of farm subsidies', and thus had destroyed developing world dairy farmers by 'dumping powdered milk on their markets'. A soundbite from Jamaican charity worker Vernon Barrett underscored this, saying that the EU had passed up a chance, with the enlargement process, to end the inequity:

Well, the indication's not there, it's not on the agenda this time round, and we fear that this is perhaps going to push it back another ten years.

Mr Franks agreed:

And it's true, the European Union still has a vast amount to explain and to change. But this as much as anything is also the moment when big chunks of the former-communist Eastern Bloc retake what they see as their right and full role in Europe.

He then introduced a contribution from the Lithuanian foreign minister, who was reminded of a 15<sup>th</sup> Century fresco which showed the nations of Europe riding to the cross:

You can see Germans, you can see Brits, you can see other nations, riding on the horses, and at the very end is Lithuania, walking not riding, so we were all the time in European civilisation, even occupied, we were very different, and now we come back to our roots.

Mr Franks concluded the package simply: 'Behind the drudgery and detail,' he said, 'this is also a summit which reeks of history and emotion.'

Stylistically, this was a report which sought to deconstruct the stage-managed set pieces and deliver a behind-the-scenes 'truth'. Such an approach can make for interesting and entertaining listening, and Mr Franks delivered a carefully crafted example of the form. But although it superficially skated over a number of key issues of the summit - for example the impact of CAP on the developing world - the report underlined strongly that these were not addressed or debated in any other context within the Today programme.

For example, it the only opportunity for an Oxfam representative to speak on EU matters during the summit period - and during the 18 weeks of monitoring to date - was in relation to the mechanics of a pantomime cow. Although Mr Franks summarised Oxfam's arguments, the exchange drew to the fore the general exclusion of many oppositional voices from the discussions surrounding the European Union, and the lack of debate within the coverage of the key themes.

### Post-Summit Reports

The next morning, Saturday December 14, began with news that agreement had been reached over accession terms for the ten candidate countries. Newsreader Brian Perkins announced that 'the ten countries which have been invited to join the European Union will now have to convince their electorates to support the idea in national referendums.' He then introduced a correspondent report by Tim Franks, who 'has been following what many people have called, 'this historic step''. This, once again, framed enlargement in pro-European terms.

At 7.32am, presenter Mark Coles conducted live interviews with Egemen Bagis, MP for Istanbul, and Bertel Haarder, Danish Minister for European Affairs. He introduced the report in terms of the Turkish disappointment at the decision reached in Copenhagen, although an introductory pre-recorded soundbite, from Lord Pearson of Rannoch, challenged EU enlargement in wider terms:

As far as we're concerned, enlargement will mean strengthening the power of the centre and therefore the United Kingdom losing even more of its sovereignty. It's a very bad idea for them; the emerging democracies and economies of Eastern Europe simply cannot afford what is known in the jargon as the *Acquis Communautaire* - the 85,000 pages of social and labour policies which, you know, will be crippling to their economies. And they're already cumulatively becoming very damaging to the British economy, all these absurd directives. I mean, these wretched people are now going to have to face directives on how they make their cheese, they won't be able to climb a ladder without somebody standing at the bottom. And then, more seriously, things like part-time workers.

Often on the Today programme, a live interview is preceded by an edited soundbite. This mechanism is most often employed when the time available for a particular interview is limited: it provides at least some degree of balance, even though the time afforded to each speaker is then disproportionate. But in this case, the use of a soundbite was unusual. First, this was the *only* contribution from a eurosceptic politician across the whole of the summit coverage. The points made warranted more space than they were given. Second, the soundbite was followed not by an interview with a single pro-European speaker but by interviews with *two*. This led to severe imbalance within the package as a whole, and raises the question as to why Lord Pearson, or someone holding similar views, was not invited to contribute to the live discussion. In having his interview edited in this way, Lord Pearson was also at a direct disadvantage: unlike the interviewees that followed his words were pre-edited, with decisions being taken on the precise contents of his contribution and its overall length. In effect, his contribution was edited clumsily: it ended with a sentence sliced in two, his comment 'and things like part-time workers' being almost meaningless in the absence further explanation.

The soundbite from Lord Pearson was followed by the interviews with Mr Bagis, and Mr Haarder. Mr Bagis was at pains to be conciliatory when asked for his reaction to the delay, setting out the constitutional amendments and legislative changes passed by the Turkish parliament and asserting that there was eighty percent support for EU membership in his country. He disagreed with Mr Coles's contention that the decision had been 'a slap in the face', saying that the announced date had been 'a little short of our expectations', but that 'a year is nothing in the lives of a country's public', and Turkey would continue with its reform programme. Mr Bagis was then asked how the EU decision would affect Turkey's ruling party, which he said had widespread support for its pro-EU stance within the two parliaments, non-governmental organisations, the media, and the Turkish citizens themselves. The final question put to the MP related to the opposition from existing member states to Turkey's application; Mr Coles noted that France and Germany had concerns, while Tony Blair 'says you've got to do better on your human rights record'. Mr Bagis agreed with Mr Blair that the country had to do better on its human rights record, and spoke about further constitutional changes passed by Turkey:

We want to increase the life standards of the Turkish people, even if we are a member of the European Union or not, we will continue with these reform programmes, and we will ensure that Turkey is a more democratic and more freer country. And that has been our election campaign promise, and we are delivering on that.

Mr Bagis's concluding comments were revealing. Until this point, the improvements taking place within Turkey had been linked intrinsically to its application for EU membership: the country had embarked on its reforms in order to meet EU standards. This had consistently placed the EU as a force for good - few would argue that the reforms taking place in Turkey with regards to democracy, human rights and living standards were anything other than positive. But Mr Bagis's comment for the first time revealed willingness for reform and social improvement in Turkey *aside* from the country's application. And although the MP for Istanbul was wholly positive towards the EU during his interview, this unguarded comment established an important eurosceptic point - which, needless to say, was not explored elsewhere.

Mr Coles then introduced Bertel Haarder, and began with a soft question on the significance of the agreement: 'how significant is this deal, is this historic? Is this really now one Europe, a new Europe?' Mr Haarder, not unsurprisingly, agreed with this analysis:

Well, it definitely is. You can't imagine what happened last night and how happy everyone was, I mean there was a big fight, but in the end it was really a celebration. And the reason why we are so happy, all 25 countries, is that we have worked so hard for this, and I mean it, thirteen years since the Berlin Wall fell down, and we have promised to do this, it has lasted too long, but now we finally did it.

Mr Coles then turned to the issues which the summit had been unable to resolve:

You say a celebration, but there are still doubts over Turkey, you failed to reach agreement on Cyprus, it's not unanimous is it?

Aside from comments made by EU commissioner Chris Patten in his interview with the programme on the first day of the summit, this was the only time the Cyprus question had been raised during the survey period. Mr Haarder's response - that the EU had *not* failed to reach an agreement on the issue, as discussions had taken place under the United Nations - presented problems for the audience, as there had been no analysis or debate regarding this issue, and therefore had no way of assessing whether his perspective was correct. There was no follow-up question to address this matter, with Mr Coles turning instead to Turkey:

How problematic is the issue of Turkey? We heard there from Mr Bagis, a Turkish MP, I mean there is genuine concern that there is opposition to Turkey's entry to the EU.

At this juncture, Mr Haarder became confused. He mistook the initial soundbite from Lord Pearson for the interview with Egemen Bagis:

Well, if you would excuse me, but as far as I could hear, he said an awful lot of nonsense, also about the social and labour policies which he claimed would cost a lot of money, and make those countries unable to pay these costs. I mean, in Britain, I don't think those policies cost anything - they don't cost anything in Denmark at least. They are about something else, not about huge costs, I mean there are no minimum wages, there's nothing that he could use as a reason for this claim, so that's just nonsense.

There was no attempt to rectify this mistake - the interview terminated there. Mark Coles thanked Mr Haarder for his input, and the programme shifted its attention to an item about Christmas Trees.

The package was badly structured and poorly stewarded. The concerns raised by Lord Pearson - the strengthening of EU power at the centre, the problems for the emerging democracies in Eastern Europe, and the restrictive directives imposed on their economies - were in themselves enough to occupy the remainder of the six-minute feature. But the agenda shifted erratically, taking in a multitude of distinct issues, and only returned to Lord Pearson's comments owing to the misunderstanding by Bertel Haarder. As with the coverage more generally, the lack of space given to such complex issues meant they were dealt with on only a superficial level.

### Turkey and the EU - Islam and Christianity

Towards the end of Saturday's programme, John Humphrys chaired a debate between historians William Dalrymple and Dr John Casey. The starting point was Turkey's EU application, but developed into a much broader debate surrounding the historical relationship between Islam and Christianity. In broad terms, Mr Dalrymple felt that there had been a long history of Christians and Muslims living together successfully, whereas Dr Casey believed that Turkey's accession would lead to an undermining of the historical idea of Europe.

Mr Dalrymple began by explaining the premise of his book, *White Nobles*: that in 18<sup>th</sup> Century India, large numbers of British men married Muslim women and converted to Islam, a fact which, he claims, contradicts the generally accepted notion that the two cultures were separate during this period.

Dr Casey agreed that this had happened in the Ottoman Empire too, but moved the discussion on to the questions faced by the modern day enlargement of the EU:

...certain ideas stand behind the European Union, there's an historic idea first of all, which is to reconcile Germany and France and end the wars that plagued a lot of Europe, but beyond that there's an idea of Europe. And the idea of Europe has to take into account its religious inheritance, its Christian inheritance, the inheritance of Greece and Rome, of Judaism as mediated through Greece and Rome - all this gives that sense of community that European idealists, these believers in the European project, base their faith on. And in that context to talk as though there are purely universal criteria, community values - as Jack Straw says - is really to undermine the whole historical idea of Europe. This doesn't mean there is any problem about understanding or admiring Islam.

Mr Dalrymple concurred that Turkey was not geographically in Europe but in Asia, and agreed that there were many reasons for objecting to Turkey joining the EU, including their poor record on minority rights and their "refusal to admit to the Armenian genocide". But, he added:

. . . anything that exacerbates the growing divide between Christianity and Islam is a very dangerous thing. If you have a Muslim country that wants to embrace the west, and I think, at a time when America is alienating great chunks of the Islamic world, that it's a very dangerous thing to shut out a Muslim country that wants to make friends.

Dr Casey said that he agreed with Mr Dalrymple's reasoning, but said that when talking about Islam, there was no problem in understanding the Muslim faith itself, adding that the issue was the politicisation of Islam, and in particular the tensions within the Middle East. Mr Humphrys then pushed him on Mr Dalrymple's point: whether excluding Turkey and alienating Islam was a wise thing to do. Dr Casey replied:

Well, I think as William says, we're alienating Islam in all sorts of ways. I don't think the exclusion of Turkey from the European Union will be the primary way of excluding Islam.

Dr Casey added that 'we have to look at why there is so much pressure from the Americans to bring Turkey into the European Union', and said he felt this was related to US Middle East policy, and especially to the current situation with Iraq. Mr Dalrymple suggested that this also included US policy towards Israel, as 'Turkey is a strong ally of Israel', and Dr Casey replied 'yes exactly.'

John Humphrys then invited Mr Dalrymple to conclude the discussion. He began by arguing that the issue was complicated, adding that where he and Dr Casey would agree was that there was nothing in Islam *per se* which created a natural hostility with Christianity because the Islamic religion grew out of the Christian Middle East. He ended by reiterating one of his earlier points:

I think any identification of Europe with Christendom is a dangerous thing. You have, and have always had very large Christian minorities in the Eastern Mediterranean, and it is though the fusion of east and west, and in cultural transfer between the two, that our civilisation has developed, so drawing firm boundaries is a dangerous thing.

The dialogue between the two academics was relaxed, with both men conceding points and reaching agreement at various points in the discussion. Although a number of political points were made, the focus here was history and culture - as would be expected from two men with this particular expertise. This made for a useful discussion on these particular aspects of enlargement, and Dr Casey was able to challenge some of the comments made by the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw during the previous morning's programme.

However, Dr Casey was the only speaker (in either live interview or pre-recorded soundbite form) to offer a sceptical perspective on Turkey's EU application during the whole of Today's coverage, and therefore an inordinate pressure rested upon his shoulders.

While cultural, historical and geographical considerations are certainly important when considering Turkey's application, they are less important than the political and economic questions which the issue raises. While Dr Casey was able to put forward some clear arguments against enlargement, his field of reference was ultimately limited to his own area of expertise. And overall, this piece threw into sharp relief that the debate about Turkey's membership was distinguished by its lack of input from a politician or economist opposed to enlargement.

#### World Press Review

The final summit-related report was broadcast on Monday December 16, with correspondent Nick Walton presenting the programme's regular World Press Review segment from Poland. He said the Polish newspapers continued to be dominated - as they

had been over the weekend - by the country's invitation to join the European Union, agreed in Copenhagen late on Friday. He began by looking at 'sober broadsheet' *Rzeczpospolita*, which lead with the slogan 'The Union Invites, Poland Decides', with the issue now to be decided in a national referendum. The paper, said Mr Walton, put an argument in support of accession, saying that 'outside the EU, Poland can do nothing but wait for a miracle'.

Mr Walton moved on to consider Poland's only tabloid, *Super Express*, which, he said, looked at 'the nitty-gritty of negotiations', and which 'led everywhere from sheep-cheese to bananas', and *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which focused on 'one of the most contentious areas of negotiation: milk quotas'. He continued:

Poles themselves are deeply divided over Europe, so it's no surprise to see *Nasz Dziennik* take a far more negative tone. *Nasz Dziennik* is a strongly Catholic paper with links to the deeply eurosceptic League of Polish Families. When it examines the date on which negotiations concluded, it sees nothing but conspiracies. It says the ex-communists and the government fixed it so that negotiations concluded on the anniversary of martial law, to make Poles forget their crimes from the past.

This was a complicated argument that was not adequately explained. Undoubtedly, for those listeners who lacked a grounding in Polish political history, the main point to stand out was the linkage of a 'deeply eurosceptic' newspaper to 'nothing but conspiracies' - a strongly negative association which, in effect, labelled eurosceptics as conspiracy theory-haunted cranks. It echoed a reference, during Today's coverage of the Brussels Enlargement summit, to 'those eurosceptic conspiracy theorists, *The Mail* and *The Sun*'. The sequence contained clear further evidence that the underlying BBC editorial attitude towards euroscepticism is that it is "extreme" and fuelled at core by conspiracy theory.

Mr Walton added that the pro-European *Rzeczpospolita* newspaper found irony rather than conspiracy in the date on which negotiations had concluded:

Instead of conspiracy, *Rzeczpospolita* finds irony in the date: 21 years on, as Poland prepares for the EU, the architect of martial law, General Jaruzelski spent the day in the defendant's box in a court room. He's on trial for the killing of striking workers in 1970, when he was defence minister. The picture alongside the words shows demonstrators camped outside his house with a cross made up of candles, and the photos of the victims of martial law.

While this section of the programme is reliant to a large extent on what was printed in a particular nation's press, once again, eurosceptic opinion was explained poorly: this time through an oblique and confusing example of opposition to EU membership.

## Conclusion

EU enlargement is an unquestionably complex issue, and many of the strongest opinions - particularly in terms of those opposed to further expansion of the EU - lie outside the established paradigms of political news reporting. Opposition to enlargement arrives from many quarters: the populations of the accession countries themselves; environmentalists and anti-globalisation protesters; left-wing parties who believe enlargement will lead to exploitation of workers; those that feel that the Union is large enough at present, or that the project is too ambitious. There are eurosceptics who believe that an enlarged union will lead to a strengthening of EU powers, and eurosceptics - including those who campaigned against the Nice Treaty during the Irish referendum - who actually support enlargement because they believe that the process could lead to a weakening of the EU's regulatory powers, and thus place an obstacle in the way of Federalisation.

The Today programme's coverage of the Copenhagen Summit contrived to exclude the majority of these viewpoints. Where they were reported, it was usually through the second-hand description of BBC correspondents or brief soundbite rather than direct interview. The coverage was dominated by a focus on pro-enlargement established British political figures, pro-European government representatives from the applicant countries and representatives of the European Commission.

In an article in *The Spectator*, Today biographer Tim Luckhurst criticised a liberal consensus which he believes has developed within BBC journalism, which has stifled debate and led to a narrowing of the range of opinions judged 'acceptable':

The problem is that the opinions which the BBC now expresses via the work of its most authoritative commentators reject the healthily disputatious discipline of seeking consensus via the juxtaposition of thesis and antithesis. The corporation's world view starts in the liberal centre and condemns alternative perspectives as mad. The BBC has forgotten that liberal consensus emerged from a conflicting blend of extremes which were mixed to create balance. It treats the rigid new orthodoxy of the militant centre as an absolute, not an average. More peculiarly, it characterises it as moderate and fails to perceive that this, too, is a form of intolerant extremism, shorn of ideology but not of menace.<sup>9</sup>

The results of this survey wholly substantiate Mr Luckhurst's charge.

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<sup>9</sup> Luckhurst, T (2003) 'The Extreme Centre', *The Spectator*, January 11, 2003