

BULGARIA UNDER FRIENDLY FIRE FROM ROMANIA

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The statements of the European parliament rapporteur for Bulgaria Geoffrey Van Orden who call premature the decision for an accession date for Bulgaria and Romania until the European Council meeting next December 14 came as an unpleasant surprise. We have no reasons to doubt Mr Van Orden's judgement, besides, he has always been well-intentioned and efficient in formulating messages towards Bulgaria.

I think the explanation for this change of mood is the reaction by the highest Romanian personalities with respect to the possible plans of the British Government to restrict free entry for Romanians and Bulgarians into the UK labour market. The President Mr Traian Basescu warned that Bucharest would impose reciprocal limitations, and the leader of the opposition Mr Mircea Geoana threatened to take legal action against Mr Tony Blair. Strangely enough Mr Geoana and Mr Blair are sitting at the same table as leaders in the Party of European Socialists.

Such a language is of course unacceptable. The Bulgarian leaders would never utter such macho sounding threats, obviously intended to please the home audience.

Now Bulgaria seems to be paying the price for its neighbour's liberties. Bulgaria and Romania have a common Accession treaty, but Sofia cannot apologize instead of Bucharest.

The opinion of the author is personal and does not reflect official views.