

Week of January 25 to 30

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OPINION : European unification aspirations unaffected by crisis

Galloping inflation, rocketing unemployment and falling living standards generally provoke public disenchantment with government policies. But a recent survey published by the European Commission following interviews with about 10,000 EEC citizens, goes to show that this is not always the case (see Eurofocus N° 3/82 p.6).

The survey illustrates that the current economic climate has not affected the way people feel about European unification. This is undoubtedly because the man in the street feels - and rightly so - that strength comes from unity and that putting an end to the crisis will be easier for the Ten together than for each country going it alone.

About 74% of the people interviewed stated that they were in favour of continuing the process of unification. This is similar to the number of people who supported unification in 1970, before the crisis. (The survey was then conducted in the six countries who were members of the EEC at that time). Support for European unification is stronger in the six founding members of the Community than in Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom, the states who joined the Community in 1973.

In Greece, the newest member of the Community, about 65% of the population indicated support for European integration. 75% of Greeks also feel that their relations with other Western European countries have improved over the last 25 years. But 21% of the population is against Greek membership of the Community. The only two countries where the percentage of those against the EEC was higher were Denmark (29%) and the United Kingdom (41%).

Representative samples of 1000 Spaniards and 2000 Portuguese were also interviewed for the first time, in view of their countries forthcoming accession to the EEC. 58% of Spaniards favoured membership of the Community, and only 6% were against it. In Portugal public opinion appeared largely indifferent and 62% of those interviewed failed to answer the question.

It is interesting to note that Spaniards believe that membership of the Community will have a stabilising influence on their democratic processes, their exports, their agriculture and the role of their country in the world.

AID : The future of Palestinian schoolchildren

Set among the pine woods and the lush farmlands of Southern Lebanon, the Palestinian refugee camp of Rashidieh is almost a ghost town. Continual shelling from the artillery of the Christian militia to the south and from Israeli gunboats has driven most of the inhabitants from their homes to seek relative safety in the slums of Beirut.

Only the very young and the very old remain, together with Diab Eisa Al-Khateeb, a smiling, nearly spherical father of four, who boasts a terror of guns and explosives and confesses his main interests to be food and football.

He is the headmaster of Rashidieh school, a bleak concrete structure set apart from the narrow dusty streets of the camp by a compound, and financed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA).

Six hundred and thirty-five similarly funded schools provide education for more than three hundred and forty thousand Palestinian refugee schoolchildren, all over the Middle East, at a cost of some two hundred and sixty-two million dollars a year.

Now the schools, which account for about sixty percent of UNWRA spending, face closure, as the organisation anticipates a seventy-seven million dollar budget deficit for 1982.

Diab Eisa Al-Khateeb believes that closing his school would be a disaster. Education is the only way that his pupils will ever escape the misery and hardship of life in Rashidieh. As stateless refugees, education will become their passport to work in other Arab countries like thousands of other graduates of UNWRA schools since 1948, he says.

UNWRA Commissioner-General Olof Rydbeck of Sweden believes that a solution to the problem must be found by the end of the year, and he recently visited EEC Aid and Development Commissioner Edgard Pisani in Brussels, to ask the European Community for help.

The Community has already pledged 5,7 million dollars in cash, together with 11,3 million dollars worth of flour and 16,9 million dollars worth of other supplies to UNWRA aid programmes for 1982.

But UNWRA would like to negotiate a trade-off between food aid and cash. They say that they do not need food as much as they need hard cash to pay for teachers.

Commissioner Pisani is said to be sympathetic to the request, but action on the part of the Community would require the approval of the Council of Ministers.

ENERGY : Towards a unified nuclear safety zone

Of all the so-called "new" sources of energy, nuclear energy is the only one which is likely to become useful in the immediate future. Its strategic importance prompted the founders of Europe to set up the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) in 1957. But the existence of Euratom has not prevented Member States from implementing sometimes very divergent nuclear policies.

There are certain points, however, on which all Member States appear to agree. Central to them is the idea that all nuclear policy decisions should take into account the need to protect workers, local people and the environment. Safety questions were not initially considered important when nuclear choices were being made, but the issue is a crucial one today. Discussions focus on just how safety can be achieved. The Committee on Energy and Research of the European Parliament has just published its views on the subject. It proposes the creation of a unified nuclear safety zone in Europe and describes how this goal can be attained.

The Committee stresses that nuclear technology is too often treated as "top secret", and this leads to suspicion. An appeal is therefore made for more information on nuclear activities and increased consultation on nuclear questions between Member States. European nuclear cooperation can boast certain successes, including the construction of Superphoenix, the fast breeder reactor prototype at Cadarache (France). The problem of safety at these nuclear plants must now receive priority.

According to the Parliamentary Committee, nuclear safety in Europe calls for action on four fronts. Firstly, the definition of certain regulations designed to prevent possible accidents; secondly, coordinated administrative action between Member States as regards the authorisation, regulation and control of nuclear plants. Thirdly, increased research into the safety of reactors, and, finally, institutional measures aimed at creating a European information service to deal with nuclear energy. This service would collect all data relating to the operations of nuclear plants in Europe and elsewhere. The analysis and comparison of this data allow appropriate safety measures to be taken in the event of accidents and breakdowns. The Committee concludes its report by calling for the introduction of common criteria to be used for the siting of plants and for the introduction of consultation procedures.

RAW MATERIALS : Europe at the mercy of raw material exporting states

Raw materials are used by mankind for fuel, the manufacture of machines and a host of other practical applications. Without an intensive exploitation of mines, the development of industrial society as we know it today would have been impossible. This exploitation of the world's natural resources has increased in recent years, especially since the Second World War. Exploitation of natural resources (excluding food products) was estimated at about 19.3 tonnes per inhabitant of the United States in 1972, compared with 15.6 tonnes in 1950.

Unlike the United States, Europe is poor in natural resources and depends to a large extent on external sources for its supplies. This dependence is estimated at 75% for 20 minerals, and as much as 100% for some key minerals, including manganese, chromium and cobalt. In today's world, raw materials are a potential source of economic and political conflict. This was clearly illustrated by the oil crisis which showed the weakness of the European position vis-à-vis the oil producers - who formed a small but unified group.

Raw material producers have in the past been paid very poorly for their output and their interests have been ignored by consuming nations. It is therefore understandable that these countries - most of which are in the Third World - should try to increase the prices they get for their raw material exports. The real problem lies elsewhere.

Firstly, natural resources are not unlimited and are renewed at a much slower rate than the rate at which they are consumed. The risk of exhaustion of resources is therefore a real one in the long term. Moreover, unexpected external events can lead to sudden breaks in supply, and, consequently, serious commodity shortages. Such a situation could be disastrous for the European economy and employment.

The oil-crisis spotlighted this problem. Once the initial shock was over, Europe began to take a close look at its rather vulnerable situation. The outlines of a concerted strategy could be seen. It is in this context that the Committee on external economic relations of the European Parliament has just published a voluminous report on the supply prospects for minerals and other raw materials imported by the Community. The committee puts emphasis on the need to improve the Community's degree of self-sufficiency for commodities and makes certain suggestions to this effect. Firstly, it says, the

Ten should undertake a detailed analysis of their potential for exploiting their own resources. The promotion of new technologies should allow for the exploitation of mines which are either inaccessible, small or possess resources of mediocre quality.

The report also appeals for a more rational utilisation of resources throughout the industrial process. This would mean an end to wastage and the introduction of waste recycling methods.

Among the other recommendations made by the committee, are calls for increased use of substitute products, the need to diversify external sources of supply and the need to relaunch investment in Europe's mining sector.

In other words, Europe must adopt a vigorous policy designed to ensure that its needs in raw materials are satisfied, without making it too dependent on external suppliers. But as the security of supplies can never be completely guaranteed, action will also be needed to set up security stocks, especially for strategic raw materials. The Committee calls on the European Commission to give concrete form to these suggestions within the context of an overall strategy, and to draw up a detailed report on the Community raw material supply situation.

#### DATA-PROCESSING : New extension of Euronet network

Since February 1980, the Community has owned a data processing network which enables European organisations to gain access to any of about 300 basic data banks in Europe. This network - called Euronet - was constructed by the European Community in conjunction with the Post and Telecommunication services of the Member States. The system permits users in various research institutes, hospitals, private businesses and local authorities to acquire data easily, quickly and cheaply. The information contained in the bank covers science, technology, economy, law and social affairs questions. Payment is not affected by distances.

Euronet already reaches beyond EEC frontiers into Switzerland. Now it will also cover Sweden following a recent agreement between the EEC and the Swedes for the transmission of data for research and information purposes. Additional information can be obtained from : Euronet, European Commission, DG XIII, Luxembourg BP1907.

EDUCATION : Short-study grants for furthering education cooperation

Education cooperation between the ten Member States of the European Community should be further enhanced as a result of the latest short-study visit schemes announced by the European Commission. The schemes are part of the education action programme adopted by EEC Ministers for education in 1976.

Beneficiaries of the project will include the teaching, administrative and research staff in the EECs higher education establishments. The second category of beneficiaries will be the local and regional administrators in educational establishments catering for the 11 to 19 year-olds. The total number of beneficiaries will be 289. Funds available for the scheme are estimated at £ 124.000.

The higher education grants will benefit 73 persons. The scheme, now in its sixth year, is designed to enable those professionally engaged in higher education to extend their knowledge and experience of higher education in other Community countries. This should, also, in the longer term, increase the opportunities for collaboration between institutions.

About 216 local and regional administrators will also receive grants to study the structures of general or technical education for the 11-19 year group.

TRADE : Agreement reached on Yugoslavia's baby beef exports to EEC

Ever since Greece became a member of the European Community, Yugoslavia and the EEC Commission have been engaged in tortuous negotiations aimed at calculating just how much "baby beef" Yugoslavia would be authorised to sell to Greece and the enlarged European Community. Belgrade authorities argued that their 2,900 tonne monthly quota to the EEC - included in the cooperation agreement signed in 1980 - should be enlarged substantially to take account of its exports of baby beef to Greece. These represent about 80% of all Yugoslav exports to Greece.

After initial opposition from France and Italy, the Commission and Yugoslavia agreed that Belgrade's baby beef exports to the ten member community should total 4,200 tonnes per month. The system is flexible enough to allow for stepped up exports to the EEC during the tourist season.

As Yugoslavia also complained about the levy imposed on its exports of baby beef, the EEC agreed to cut it by 50%. This will make it easier for Yugoslav baby beef to enter the EEC.