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EUROPEAN COMMUNITY-YUGOSLAVIA:

PRESIDENT JENKINS VISITS BELGRADE

European Community Commission President Roy Jenkins visited Belgrade on February 29th and met with Yugoslav government officials. His visit followed the February 25th initialling of a new agreement between Yugoslavia and the European Community. It demonstrated the European Community's interest in fostering closer relations with Yugoslavia. President Jenkins issued the following statement in the Yugoslav capital:

"My purpose in coming to Belgrade was to underline the close and friendly relationship which exists between Yugoslavia and the European Community and to demonstrate the importance we attach to this relationship, as symbolized and given practical effect in the major and the unique agreement which was initialled in Brussels on February 25, 1980.

During my visit I have had talks with Vice-President Kolisevski, with the President of the Federal Executive Council, with the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, with the President of the Assembly and with the President of the Economic Chamber of Yugoslavia. During my talks I stressed the importance of the agreement both to us in the Community and its significance in bringing us closer together and above all in opening up opportunities to Yugoslavia to expand her exports to the Community and thus reduce the present imbalance of trade.

Not only is the agreement far-reaching from an economic point of view, it is in fact sui generis as an agreement. It is without precedent. It fully respects Yugoslavia's position as a non-aligned, European, Mediterranean developing country.

I have been pleased during my visit to be assured that the significance of the agreement is fully appreciated by the Yugoslav government and I believe equally by Yugoslav business and industry. Those I met expressed their satisfaction at the agreement and at the opportunities it offers for this country.

I stress the word 'opportunity', for the key will lie in the follow-up to the agreement and I have been impressed by the amount of preparation which has been done to ensure its full implementation.

We hope that the Council of Ministers will approve the agreement and that it can be signed in April. The agreement will take some time (possibly up to 23 months) to be ratified and thus come formally into effect. We therefore have in mind an interim arrangement which will bring the trade clauses into effect as early as July 1st of this year. We would then envisage in the autumn a first meeting of the Joint Committee to have a discussion of the follow-up. The Commission also proposes to open an office in Belgrade before the end of the year, a proposal which, I am pleased to say, is warmly welcomed on the Yugoslav side.

Although the agreement and its implementation formed the main subject of my discussions, I also had an opportunity to exchange views about current political developments which affect us both in these times of stress and danger. I was able to gain a valuable understanding of the Yugoslav view, and to express the Community's fundamental respect for the Yugoslav position. Our links of friendship, cooperation and understanding are now underpinned by the important new agreement."

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