



COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN
COMMUNITIES

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WE/35/92
8 October 1992

THE WEEK IN EUROPE

European Council on Maastricht. The Birmingham European Community summit on 16 October should give a "new and united signal" showing how the Community can respond to public disquiet over ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, and come closer to the lives of Europe's citizens. This is reported to be the thrust of the Prime Minister John Major's letter last week to EC leaders. Major's proposals, to be discussed at the summit, are designed to reassure Europe's citizens that the Treaty is in their best interests. UK Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd told the General Affairs Council in Luxembourg on Monday that the Presidency's proposals would show that the Twelve were in harmony with public opinion. The "man in the street" should be given a clear explanation of how Maastricht will benefit everyday life. Continuing the Presidency's round of bi-lateral meetings, Hurd met with Spanish and Portuguese colleagues yesterday to find common ground for the summit's agenda. The search is on for a comprehensive definition of the principle of subsidiarity.

EP on Maastricht. Commission President Jacques Delors will be addressing a special session of the European Parliament next Wednesday (14 October) called to debate European Union and ratification of Maastricht. The UK Minister for European Affairs, Tristan Garel-Jones, is also invited to speak.

Visegrad cooperation. Foreign ministers from the three Visegrad countries (Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland) met their EC counterparts on the fringes of Monday's meeting to discuss relations under the Association Agreements which will be formally ratified on 1 January. The Council expressed "sympathy" for the Visegrad states' objective of full Community membership, but said it was too soon to establish a fixed timetable for negotiations. Both sides welcomed the suggestion that Bulgaria and Romania should become members of the Group once their EC Association Agreements were in place.

Aid to Somalia. EC Foreign ministers appealed to other international donors to supplement the Community's aid effort to Somalia after hearing a report by Lady Chalker on last month's Troika visit which she led on behalf of the UK Presidency. The EC, having donated 186,000 tonnes of cereal equivalent and around 15m ECUs (£11.25m) of emergency aid this year, tops the list of world donors. The Commission gave the go-ahead for Lomé funds, destined for long-term development in Somalia, to be mobilised again for urgent short-term aid, such as the financing of UN troops.

Declaration on ex-Yugoslavia. The General Affairs council called for another relief effort to alleviate the suffering in former Yugoslavia as the onset of winter makes conditions harsher for the Bosnian refugees. Following this appeal, the Commission announced yesterday a third tranche of aid, some 120m ECUs (£90m), to be disbursed before Christmas. The EC's Humanitarian Office estimates that 2.76 million people have been displaced by the war. Total Community aid amounts to 289m ECUs (£216m).

Amsterdam air crash. The Commission is sending 1m ECUs (£750,000) of financial help and basic necessities to the families of victims in Sunday's air crash in Amsterdam.

UK milk marketing. UK dairy farmers will be free to decide where to sell their milk, and dairies free to buy their milk where they want, after the Commission's decision on Tuesday to approve UK government plans to end the Milk Marketing Board's monopoly. The MMB, with a monopoly on nearly all UK farmers' milk, will be replaced by single producers' co-operatives which farmers will be free to join if they wish. Competition Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan, detailing the Commission's response in a letter to UK Agriculture Minister John Gummer, said that while he would have preferred more successor organisations, he was satisfied the plans would ensure a freer, more competitive milk market.

Air France/Sabena deal. After almost a year of deliberation, the Commission gave the go-ahead on Monday for Air France to acquire a 37,6% stake in the Belgian airline, Sabena. The deal is subject to the two airlines' accepting competition from rival carriers on certain shuttle routes between Belgium and France and some scheduled services to Africa. Sir Leon Brittan said that once the conditions were accepted the cooperation between the airlines would be compatible with the Single Market.

British Steel's Swedish stake. The Commission has approved the acquisition by the Swedish steel company, Avesta AB, of British Steel's stainless steel production and distribution operations. The deal, scrutinised under EC competition rules, gives British Steel a 40% equity stake in the enlarged company.

Aids vaccine co-operation. The Commission has approved a network of co-operation agreements among EC and US medical research institutes, a UK venture capital company and an American medical supply company for research and development of a vaccine to combat HIV infections. Co-operation is vital to the funding of new technology required by the institutions involved; the Imperial Cancer Research Fund; the Medical Research Council; University College London and the US research foundation, Southwest. The Commission accepts that the high financial costs and risk of failure justify the need for worldwide exclusive sales rights by the parties.

PHARE assists Bulgaria. A two-day PHARE workshop earlier this week in Hissar, Bulgaria, brought forward plans for agricultural reforms in Bulgaria. The meeting discussed proposals for privatisation, disputed property claims and full trade and price liberalisation. The EC has already committed some 41m ECUs (£30.75m) of PHARE funds to support Bulgarian agriculture, but the lack of an overall strategy had delayed progress. Foreign Affairs Commissioner Vice-President Frans Andriessen welcomed the "pace of change" achieved at the workshop.

Ecosoc goes East. Representatives of economic and social organisations in central and eastern Europe met their EC counterparts from the Economic and Social Committee (Ecosoc) in Brussels last week. In a joint statement, the two sides highlighted their objectives of: establishing consultative mechanisms appropriate to the newly-democratised countries; involving Ecosoc in the implementation of the EC's Association Agreements; and setting-up a consultative body of eastern and central European social partners and Ecosoc representatives. Ecosoc is drawing up an opinion on consultative mechanisms in eastern Europe, following up its demand for a social dimension in the Association Agreements.

Fisheries policy. The Commission adopted its new fisheries' proposals which will introduce satellite monitoring of fishing fleets and the use of a "tachograph" system on individual boats. Other measures include: uniform sanctions; standard net sizes and strengthening Community inspections. Member States will be responsible for controlling the new Common Fisheries' Policy. The proposals will be considered by EC fishery ministers on 19 October.

Consumer films. The second festival of film to encourage the cinema, TV and video industries to deal with the subject of "Consumers and the Quality of Life" opened in Santander, Spain on Sunday. The five-day festival presented some 12 films, 13 short films, 46 TV programmes, 62 education films and 65 advertisements entered from across the world for awards for technical quality, originality of subject and information. EC Consumer Affairs Commissioner Karel van Miert told entrants that the visual media had an essential role to play in relaying information to the consumer in the run up to the Single Market as it had the power to transcend national frontiers.

Education and Europe. The Education and Youth Programme of the European Arts Festival aims to encourage schools to add a European dimension to their arts curriculum. It provides young people with opportunities to work with visiting artists and musicians. Contact Sally Lewis: 071 383 5750.

European Literary and Translation Prize. Irish author William Trevor is on the shortlist for the Commission's 1992 European Literary Prize for his novel, "Reading Turgenev". The prize of 20,000 ECUs (£15,000) will go to the author who has made the most significant contribution to contemporary European literature. A similar prize is awarded for translation.

Radio One's EuroAction week. BBC Radio One's Action Special, giving listeners advice and information on jobs, training and education, goes European this year. The station links up with other European broadcasters for a series of programmes from 9-16 October. Contact Kathryn Morrison on 071 927 4913.

Conference & Diary Dates:

Second EC-GCC Industrial Conference - A co-operation conference with the Gulf states, addressed by high level Commission and Member State delegations, to discuss increased trade, business and investment opportunities. 25-27 October in Doha, Qatar. Details, fax 010 31 70 361 48 46.

London Europe Society's luncheon - General Sir Brian Kenny GCB CBE will speak on "The Defence of Europe" at St Ermin's Hotel, Monday 19 October. Contact Mrs Dora Prag on 043 871 2999.

European Arts Festival update - The medieval De Croy Book of Hours is showing on video, page by page, at the Ruskin Gallery, Sheffield, 10 Oct; The Logos Ensemble from Italy play Danatoni at the Blackfriars Hall, Norwich, 14 Oct.

Council Meetings:

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| Research | 12 October | Luxembourg |
| Social Affairs | 12-13 October | Chepstow |
| European Council | 16 October | Birmingham (Summit) |
| Ecofin | 19 October | Luxembourg |
| Fisheries | 19 October | Luxembourg |

Our next briefing will be on Thursday, 15 October at 11.30am.