



COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN
COMMUNITIES

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THE WEEK IN EUROPE

EC backs UK proposal on Kurds. Meeting at Mondorf-les-Bains in Luxembourg last weekend, European Community Foreign Ministers backed the UK's proposal for a United Nations police force to provide Kurdish refugees with protection on their return to Iraq. Jacques Poos, Foreign Minister of Luxembourg which currently holds the EC Presidency, said the British idea to replace allied troops with UN police had unanimous EC support. Commenting on the Foreign Ministers' backing, UK Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said: "The idea is to enable the UN, without stretching its constitutional position, to provide protection as well as relief for the Kurds". The new plan goes to New York as a British initiative, but with the support of France and Belgium, currently on the Security Council, and all EC States. Poos also brought up the question of reported human rights abuses in Kuwait. The EC Presidency had already complained to Kuwait about abuses and will do so again next week when Kuwait and other Gulf States negotiate with the EC on trade. Meanwhile, other European initiatives to help Kurdish refugees have been revealed. The EC and the Netherlands Government have agreed to cofinance the installation of a camp for 10,000 Iraqi refugees in the Zakho valley in Northern Iraq. The operation consists of the complete equipment and installation of the camp with the Community giving 1,822,000 ecus (£1,275m) to pay for 1,500 tents, 20,000 blankets, a full hospital for 350 people plus stocks of medicines and the provision of water pumps. The Dutch Government will oversee and execute the operation under the auspices of its armed forces. Further aid comes from a joint EC-France operation to provide relief for 150,000 Kurdish refugees travelling back through the mountains to Iraq. The French will supervise the two-week operation while the EC will provide 2,145,000 ecus (£1.5m), 1,453 tonnes of food and 135,000 pairs of shoes.

Polls back European integration. EC-wide polls carried out by Eurobarometer a few days after the liberation of Kuwait showed 64% (+3%: UK 55%) wanted to see European integration speeded up and 61% (+11%: UK 72%) thought that the Community should have a European military intervention force to deal with similar crises. The suggestion that the EC should have a common foreign policy to deal with a crisis like the Gulf won the support of 75%. The UK's 80% response to the question was the highest percentage in the twelve. In addition a variety of issues being debated at the two InterGovernmental Conferences on Political Union and on Economic and Monetary Union receive a very favourable reception from the general EC public. The establishment of a European citizenship, proposed by Spain, is considered "a good thing" by 60% of EC citizens (UK 49%); with a particularly warm welcome from Spaniards (78%), Greeks and Italians (73%). Denmark is the only country with a majority (54%) saying the idea is a bad thing. A majority of Europeans 62% (UK 33%) is in favour of the Community being responsible for a common policy in matters of security and defence; 58% (UK 57%) believe that the Community will have a military intervention force by the year 2000; 60% of EC citizens (54% UK) are supporters of a single currency replacing the different currencies of the Member States in five or six years' time; 64% (UK 66%) think that this will have become a reality by the year 2000. Furthermore, in the majority of member countries, support for the European Community underwent a very noticeable increase compared to the results of the Autumn 1990 poll, which had already been at an all-time high. Compared with the Autumn poll, the view that EC membership is a "good thing" (72%) was shared by 57% of Britons questioned, a 4% rise on the previous figure.

EC backs mail order takeover. The Commission last week gave the go-ahead for the UK's Empire Stores Group to be taken over by France's largest mail order firm, La Redoute Catalogue SA. the decision comes after a month-long inquiry. The Commission said that this marked the second time in two months that a Continental mail order company had been allowed to take a foothold in the UK, where until recently only domestic operators were present. The other deal was the takeover by Germany's Otto Versand of Next's Grattan subsidiary.

MacSharry speaks out on farm subsidies. Speaking on the eve of his talks with US Secretary for Agriculture Ed Madigan in Washington, Agriculture Commissioner Ray MacSharry called for a new realism about gradual dismantling of farm subsidies if there is to be a successful conclusion to the

Uruguay Round liberalisation talks. He stressed it was important to be realistic "because it was becoming much more difficult to deliver" on the EC offer, the negotiation of which brought the GATT talks to a standstill in December. MacSharry also confirmed that he wanted to put the details of his plan to reform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to EC Farm Ministers in June. He said the EC's offer remained the same - a 30% cut in domestic farm subsidies over ten years counted from 1986. The reform plan now scheduled for June, is intended to move the emphasis of farm support from subsidised prices to direct payments to farmers thus cutting output and eventually export subsidies.

Commission takes stance on Japanese car imports. the Commission voted on Tuesday in favour of a package of negotiating principles on the thorny question of Japanese car imports into the EC. The Commission is not revealing details but press reports suggest principles include eliminating by the start of 1993 remaining national restrictions on Japanese cars coming into the EC and monitoring the level of Japanese cars imported or made in the EC until the end of 1998 or 1999, after which time the EC will have a totally free car market. The Commission is also believed to be about to propose a research and development programme to fit the EC car industry better to meet Japanese competition by the end of the century. At present Japan has 10.5% of total annual car sales of 13m in the EC and of this share 260,000 cars are made in Community factories.

Commission probe for electronics industry. Meeting on Monday in Luxembourg, EC Industry Ministers asked the Commission to organise an urgent high-level investigation into the troubled European electronics industry. The Ministers agreed that the Commission should, after consulting companies and governments, produce concrete proposals rapidly to target EC-funded research more effectively. But they also agreed not to favour big EC companies to the detriment of small or non-EC ones.

ECO/SOC meets Douglas Hurd. A delegation from the Economic and Social Committee of the EC, the 189 member strong (including 24 British) consultative assembly, met UK Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and Secretary of State for European Affairs Tristan Garel-Jones on Monday at the Foreign Office. They exchanged views about the way the Economic and Social Committee would like to see the Treaty of Rome modified in the framework of the InterGovernmental Conference on Political Union, so that it might play its consultative role to the full in the EC decision-making process. They also talked about the way ECO/SOC could eventually help Member States' regions get involved in the EC.

Only Connect. For the first time since the UK joined the European Community in 1973, Westminster MPs are now allowed free telephone calls to European institutions. Since mid-April designated telephone terminals in the Palace of Westminster may be used by MPs to call the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, NATO and WEU as well as other European establishments in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg.

East Sussex Europe Week: 6 - 11 May. Details from Chris Reade - Tel: 0273 482636 or Fax: 0273 474600 or from East Sussex County Council, Pelham House, St Andrew's Lane, Lewes BN7 1UN.

European Union: Fortress or Democracy. Sub-title: Towards a Democratic Market and a new Economic order. By Michael Barratt Brown, Director of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and Chairman of Third World Information Network and Twin Trading Ltd. Published by Spokesman for European Labour Forum. Price £7.95. ISBN 0-85124-5218. Contact Tel: 0602 784 504.

Conference and Diary Dates

Environmental Law Seminar. Sponsored by Field, Fisher, Waterhouse Solicitors on 9 May at 41 Vine Street, London EC3N 2AA. Contact Denise Franklyn - Tel: 071-481 4841. Fax: 071-488 0084.

Lobbying and Decision-making in Europe. The second annual Hawkesmere Conference. A major one-day conference which will explain how the European institutions operate, analyse their relevance to UK operations and offer practical guidance as to how best to influence the European decision-making process. 24 May. Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre, London. Price £295 + VAT. Speakers include Lord Clinton-Davis and Bryan Cassidy MEP. Details from Hawskmere Ltd, 12-18 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH. Tel: 071-824 8257. Fax: 071-730 4293.

What exchange rate system for Eastern Europe? A lunchtime meeting on 29 May at 1.30pm at Jean Monnet House, 8 Storey's Gate, London SW1. Speaker Dr Peter Bofinger of Landeszentralbank, Stuttgart and CEPR. Details: Carolyn Collins - Tel: 071-930 2963.

Internal Market Council	13 May	Brussels
General Affairs Council	13-14 May	Brussels
European Parliament Session	13-17 May	Strasbourg
Agriculture Council	21-22 May	Brussels

Our next briefing will take place on Thursday, 9 May 1991 at 11.30 am.