



*European Communities
Commission
Press Release*

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THE NINE MUST ACT TOGETHER, SAYS MR TUGENDHAT

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The problem of the British contribution to the European Community budget must not be allowed to dominate either Britain's position in the Community or the Community itself, said Mr Christopher Tugendhat, Commissioner of the European Communities, at a meeting of the European Union of Women at Beaconsfield, Bucks today. The outlines of an equitable solution were already clear, he said.

"We in Europe must not fall into the trap of concentrating on our internal disagreements - significant as this one indubitably is - at the expense of far greater international problems.

The need for greater European solidarity and the development of close co-operation in foreign policy has been highlighted by the recent increase in international tension as a result of events in Afghanistan and Iran.

"These events have reminded us of the weakness of a policy of isolation and of the possibilities offered by the European Community, through development of its mechanisms for political co-operation, to agree a common European response which may help to deal with international crises. However limited our capacity to achieve such common positions may yet be, they are the only means by which any of the Community's member states can significantly influence world events.

"The upheaval in Iran and the taking of the American hostages, followed by the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, have created a situation in which world peace is threatened and the West's already considerable concern about the future security of vital supplies of oil has been increased. The stability and independence of the Middle East is of vital concern to Europe and the resolution of the crisis currently affecting that area must take priority over our internal difficulties.

"The Community must show the Soviet Union that relations cannot continue on a normal basis while Soviet troops remain in Afghanistan. Here it has proved more difficult to secure agreement among member states on exactly what action can and should be taken to apply pressure most effectively on the Soviet Union and to express opposition to the invasion. It is clear that whatever is done must be done in a careful and deliberate way which does not do more harm to ourselves than to the Soviet Union or further exacerbate the debilitating economic difficulties of the West.

"Following the American decision at the beginning of the year to limit its trade with the USSR the Community moved quickly to show its support. The Commission itself in the first week of January exercised its executive responsibilities, in consultation with member states, by stopping the food aid programme to Afghanistan, by putting forward proposals for immediate aid to Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and by taking administrative action to ensure that exports of Community agricultural products to the Soviet Union did not replace those stopped by the United States.

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"There is a further sanction which the West could apply to Russia with, I believe, some effect - a boycott of the Olympic Games in Moscow. A decision to carry out such a boycott is, of course, one for individual nations and their Olympic Committees but the adoption of a common European position would, I believe, carry a considerable moral influence. Several European governments have already expressed their opposition to participation in what is clearly being designed by the Soviet Union as a festival of national self-congratulation.

"The Olympic Games are the greatest publicity event of the modern world and to claim that they can represent an oasis of peaceful co-operation while the Soviet tanks roll into Afghanistan suggests a detachment from the real world which I find quite staggering. A boycott by European sportsmen would bring home to the Russian people what we think about their government's actions."

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