



COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN
COMMUNITIES

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THE WEEK IN EUROPE

Gorbachev appeal on Gulf welcomed by EC. EC Foreign Ministers, meeting in Luxembourg on Tuesday, welcomed Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's appeal for peace in the Gulf and expressed the hope that Iraq would announce a complete withdrawal from Kuwait within hours. The special meeting, called mainly to discuss the EC's long-term strategy towards the Middle East, was overshadowed by uncertainty over the last-minute Moscow-Baghdad diplomacy. A statement from the Twelve calls for an international conference "at an appropriate time" to try to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian issue. In addition, the main business of the meeting was to set broad guidelines for three of their number, the EC troika of the Italian, Luxembourg and Dutch Foreign Ministers, to embark next week on a series of meetings with Egypt, Syria, the Gulf and Mahgreb countries. Europe could make its own contribution to stability in the Middle East, said Jacques Poos, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, by encouraging Mediterranean and Middle East States to form a system of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM). France, Italy, Spain and Portugal said on Tuesday they would soon present EC partners with a full proposal on a CSCM.

UK to propose EC Foreign Policy Treaty. Delivering the Churchill Memorial lecture in Luxembourg on Tuesday, UK Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd aligned the UK decisively with the majority of EC countries which want to exploit their dual membership of the Western European Union and the European Community to bring the two closer together. Hurd said the UK will soon propose a draft treaty for a common EC foreign and security (though not defence) policy. Hurd warned the Twelve against trying to settle common foreign and security policies by majority vote. He concluded by saying that in designing a common foreign and security policy, the EC needed to "get the transatlantic relationship right." Europe had, he said, in the past leaned more heavily on the US than was going to be realistic in the future.

EC debates aid to Soviet Union. Meeting on Tuesday in Luxembourg EC Foreign Ministers prepared themselves to resume wide-ranging aid to the Soviet Union, stalled in reaction to Moscow's strong-arm methods in the Baltic Republics. After hearing from Foreign Ministers of the current troika (Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands) about meetings last weekend with the Soviet leadership, the Twelve decided to ask the Commission to start work again on providing 500m ecus (£353m) in food credits and 400m ecus (£280m) of technical assistance.

EC road safety plea. Describing the number of road accidents in the EC as reading like a "wartime casualty list", a high level expert group has called for a European policy for road safety. The report says each year road accidents are the cause of about 50,000 deaths and more than 1.5m injuries on the roads of the Community. Since the Treaty was signed in 1957 almost 2 million people have been killed in the present twelve member EC. The report underlines not only the human cost but the economic one. It values the latter at 70bn ecus (£49bn) a year. Following on from an analysis of the problems, the report lists more than 60 specific technical measures the EC and Member States could take. According to the statistics used, the UK's roads are among the safest in Europe; Portugal's the most dangerous.

Commission rules against Eurosport. Yesterday (Wednesday) the Commission ruled that the operation of Eurosport, the transnational satellite sports TV channel, was contrary to EC competition rules. This decision follows a complaint to the Commission concerning Eurosport by Screensport, a similar type of sports channel. The complaint was directed against agreement by the Eurosport Consortium, a group of members of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), Sky Television and News International PLC. The Commission found that the effect of these agreements was to limit and distort free competition. They brought together two potential competitors for sports programmes so they cooperated instead of competing, while at the same time denying access to programmes for other satellite or cable services.

Airbus dispute. The European Commission has publicly expressed its concern and deep regret over the United States' decision to resume trade action against the European Community. A brief statement issued in Brussels on Friday said the US decision would inevitably increase trade tensions and contribute

to the climate of uncertainty which already reigned over the world aircraft market. The Commission was willing to pursue a constructive dialogue with the US Government but warned that if the US carried out its threat, the Community would be obliged to react.

Executive Training Programme in Japan. The Commission has announced the start of recruitment for the 12th Executive Training Programme (ETP) which offers a unique opportunity for young businessmen and women from EC countries to acquire a detailed understanding of Japanese industry and commerce and fluency in the Japanese language. Applicants for the course starting May 1992 should be aged 25-37, with University or equivalent education and at least two years' work experience. Lists close 1 July 1991. Details: PA Consulting Group; London - Tel: 071 730 9000, Fax: 071 333 5050; Belfast - Tel: 0232 327 467; Fax: 0232 242 292.

Millan, the regions and the recessions. Delivering the Denman lecture in Cambridge last week, Regional Policy Commissioner Bruce Millan spoke about the threat of world-wide economic recession and its impact in regions in the EC. Over time, he said, disparities had tended to narrow when general economic conditions had been good and to widen during recessions. He added that overall growth on its own was not sufficient to alter regional performance if the regions themselves did not have the capacity to exploit new market potential. He pointed out that the Community had considerably increased the programme of financial assistance from the Structural Funds to poorer and disadvantaged regions in the Community, totalling over 60bn ecus (£42bn) between 1989 to 1993.

Brittan on state aid policy. Speaking in Strasbourg on Tuesday, Sir Leon Brittan spoke on the levels of EC state aid to the poorer regions, saying national budgetary constraints were relevant in terms of the volume of regional aid nationally spent. He pointed out that even with the important recent doubling of the Structural Funds, national spending far outstrips Community funding. "For example, annual national average spending in the period 1986-1988 was 12bn ecus (£8.5bn) compared to European Development Fund commitments of 3.7bn ecus (£2.6bn).

Brittan on farm reform. In a speech in Derby last week, Commission Vice-President Sir Leon Brittan said the Commission's new schemes for farm reform were only a starting point for discussions and were a "serious attempt to tackle the central problem of too high prices that lies at the root of all the CAP difficulties." Sir Leon warned against dismissing the proposed reforms outright and commended the UK's criticism of the Common Agricultural Policy as it stands. He said that without reform, farmers' incomes would fall further and surpluses get out of control. Agricultural Commissioner Ray MacSharry has already said that urgent action on EC spending on subsidies to farmers is needed.

Citizen's Europe Advisory Service. This service is now moving into its second year of operation. The role of coordinator is being passed on from Peter Sandler who set-up the CEAS in September 1989 to Bernadine Adkins, an experienced lawyer on European Community affairs, who has been seconded to the Commission by her firm Watson, Farley and Williams. The CEAS has already dealt with more than 500 individual inquiries and problems encountered by ordinary citizens as they face the wealth of opportunities offered by the Single Market. It has also established links with other information providers, such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Local Government Information Bureau. The service continues to operate every Monday from the Commission's London Office.

Health and Safety in the EC. Number 2/90 of "Social Europe". produced by the Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs has just come out. The whole issue is devoted to the field of health and safety at work in the Community. ISSN 0255-0776 available from HMSO.

Conference and Diary Dates.

Construction Industry building for a place in Europe. Seminar organised by Newcastle City Council at the Civic Centre, 28 February. For details contact Kathleen Shaw at the Economic Development Unit of Newcastle City Council on 091 232 8520, ext 5038.

"Influencing decisions in Europe." Seminar, organised by European Centre for Public Affairs, at Wiston House Sussex on 6 - 8 March. Details from ECPA, Templeton College, Oxford OX1 5NY. Tel: 0865 735 422.

"Europe 1992: The teacher's role in vocational education and training." Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster. 11 March, 10.30 - 16.00. Details from APC International, at Middlesex Polytechnic, All Saints, White Hart Lane, London N17 8AR. Tel: 081 368 1299.

ECO/SOC Plenary Session	27 - 28 February	Brussels
General Affairs Council	4 - 5 March	Brussels
Agricultural Council	4 - 5 March	Brussels

Our next briefing will take place on Thursday, 28 February at 11.30am.