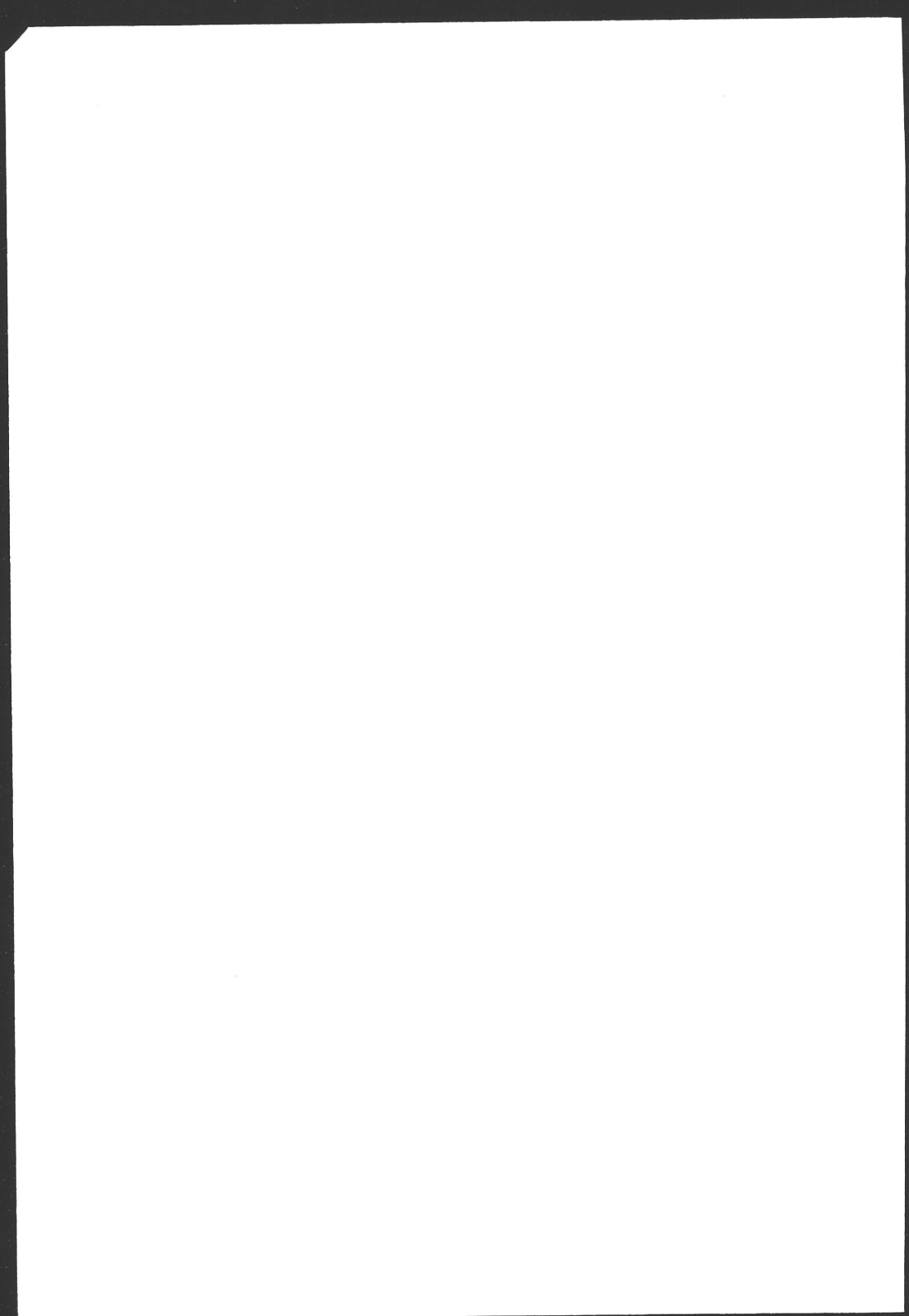


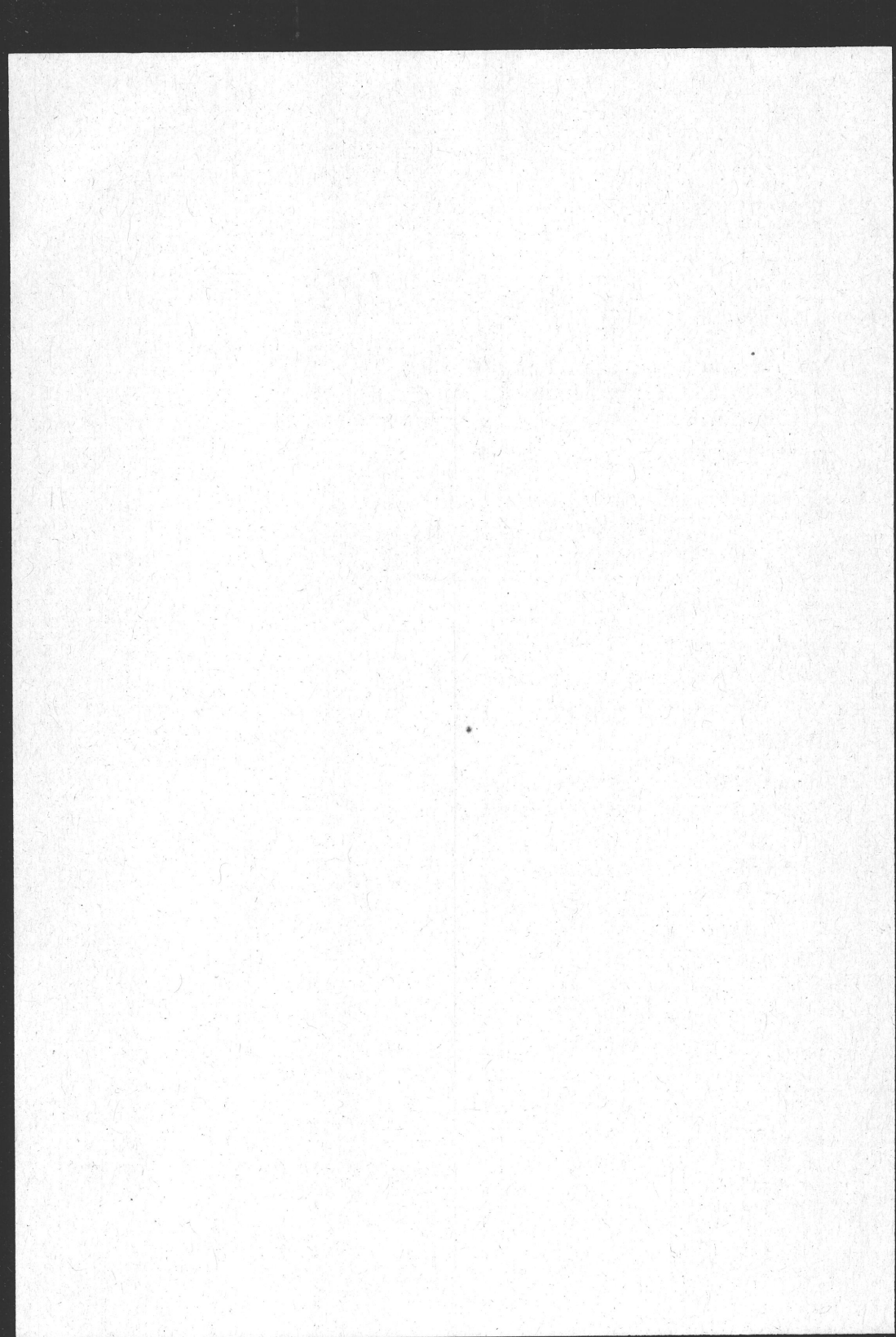
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Directorate General XXI  
Customs and Indirect Taxation

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# Editorial



**T**hings have been slowly getting back together again after the sudden, but prolonged, departure of Peter Wilmott. Healthily not everyone necessarily agreed with what the Editor said on that occasion and there is a letter and an article on the subject. After an exiting time of whispering names and laying odds in the corridors of MDB the winner emerged as James Currie of our Washington office. He will probably be the first to admit that he doesn't know too much about taxation and customs beyond what every taxpayer and traveller has experienced. It is up to us not to try and bamboozle him with science and jargon and to keep things simple and clear. That

might help some of us others to understand as well!

Anyway congratulations, and welcome aboard. Will you last longer than average;- five years - or don't you want early retirement? When we invited him to write a few lines for us he wisely declined the invitation until he had his feet on the ground. But he did write and say that he was 'looking forward to what will be a challenging job, but rest assured I have no problems with my career choice'. We hope he doesn't change his mind!

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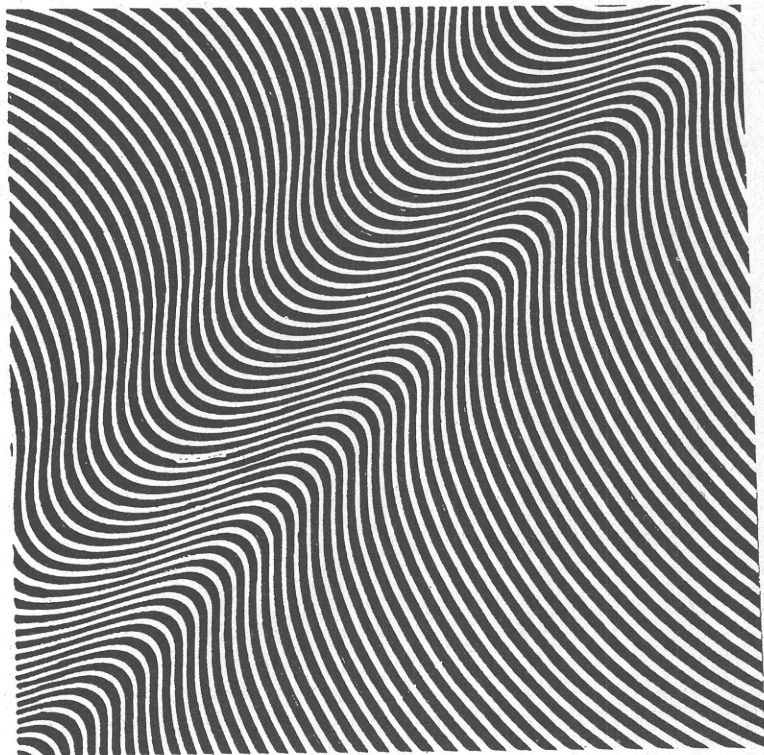
Apart from that what else has happened? Well we now have the weekly chance to brief our

*Commissioner in person and not only at DG level: even the lowly desk officers are invited and actually participate. When did that last happen, probably when our Commissioner was Stevie Wonder, or in his Belgian pseudonym, Etienne Davignon? Now that is a long time! Apparently according to those who have been there things were a little strained at first, no wonder, but now are loosening up with a more relaxed approach on both sides which can only be a*

*good thing. This is an extremely sensible and imaginative step that our Commissioner has taken and he is to be congratulated. It doesn't mean we will all get to see him - that is not the idea - but he will at least see and possibly talk to those of us lucky or unfortunate to get stuck with how to measure bananas or the quality of beef.*

*♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪*

*With the new regime one question that springs to mind is what atti-*



tude our DG will take to the 'Board'. Will it develop, given that he is, at present at least, a layman, into a real directing body with joint policy consideration and with responsibilities or will it continue to be a shop for bargaining over staff allocation and the occasional settling of differences between Directorates? Perhaps interesting in this connection is the news which has just come from the UK of an unusual step in appointing two non-executive members from outside the Civil Service entirely. One is from the financial house arm of the Midland Bank and the other is Director of human resources at Smiths industries, an aerospace, medical instruments industrial group. We also discover that two of HM Customs and Excise 'Directors' are also members of the board of the Royal Bank of Scotland and Marks and Spencers respectively. Does this give rise to any thoughts of increasing the role of the Consultative Committee? Certainly the Commission is not particularly strong in management terms and all the past initiatives, at Commission level or in DG XXI, seem to have ground to a halt, for better or worse, in the past leaving only further confusion behind them. Perhaps the problem is that those responsible for policy are also responsible for administrative matters and one tends to suffer in relation to trying to keep up on the other.

¿?¿?¿?¿?¿?¿?¿?¿?¿?

Another question is the future of the INFO. We are probably safe for one more issue, as the DG has promised a contribution, but after that, it will depend partly on the quality of the product, and you are the producers of the raw material. Off to work! You are also the consumers and you don't really let us know whether you think we perform a useful function or if we do it well or badly. What about telling us?

¿?¿?¿?¿?¿?¿?¿?¿?¿?

Spring has not exactly sprung yet, but at least it seems to have stopped snowing. Soon we will be able to take our coats off and enjoy the flowers and terraces. It should be hotter this year as the expanse of silver reflecting glass not far away is getting larger and larger. Some however didn't get enough snow and went off in search of it while others were scared they would get too much and went to sunnier climes (is that why Mr Currie came back to Brussels from Washington?). Now we should all be more or less back and getting stuck in. We are always asking for reports from unusual holidays or missions. But we don't get so much response so one of the editorial team went and did it for you.

This 'term' we should see the

*question of reform of the transit system getting more and more heated, the problems of having to pay duties and tax if you have been the victim of a false origin or quality certificate or the transit Mafia will be coming to a head and on the tax side we presumably will be seeing movement on the mutual assistance on recovery side and perhaps a definitive VAT regime involving a thorough re-*

*view of the VAT system as a whole as well? Then the duty free war will hot up as the trade tries to resist the inevitable(?) and we see the publication of the report on how these shops are functioning, there should be material enough for our columns, but it is up to you to supply it.*

???

*So to sum up we should be*





## WHO DOES WHAT

### US (we) and the Eastern half of Europe

*I*n the aftermath of the demolition of the Berlin Wall, a historical process has been set into motion: the countries in Central and Eastern Europe have started the (how long?) way back home.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1988, the conclusion of Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreements, Free Trade Agreements, Interim Agreements and Europe Agreements form part of the European Community strategy to support the reform process through the facilitation of market access, the exten-

sion of loan facilities and the implementation of a programme specifically designed to assist the process of economic restructuring, known as the Community's PHARE programme.

The Europe Agreements provide the overall framework for a very close association based on shared values and conditional on continued reforms leading to effective democracies and functioning market oriented economies. Even before their entry into force<sup>1)</sup>, the Commission already proposed to the Edinburgh Euro-

1)

Country	Signed	In Force	Published
Poland	16.12.91	01.02.94	L 348/93
Hungary	16.12.91	01.02.94	L 348/93
Czech Republic	04.10.93	01.02.95	L 360/94
Slovak Republic	04.10.93	01.02.95	L 359/94
Roumania	01.02.93	01.02.95	L 357/94
Bulgaria	08.03.93	01.02.95	L 358/94
Estonia	12.06.95	not yet	COM (95) 207 final
Latvia	12.06.95	not yet	COM (95) 207 final
Lithuania	12.06.95	not yet	COM (95) 207 final
Slovenia	initialled on 15.06.95	not yet	not yet

pean Council (December 92) to fully take advantage of the dynamic character of these agreements to further deepen and broaden our relations.

In this context, the Copenhagen European Council stated that the associated countries that so desire may become members of the European Union, when they are able to assume the obligation of membership (and when the union has tackled the decisions on institutional questions that will be raised at the 1996 inter-governmental conference).

Since this historical statement, the submission of applications for membership have not ceased<sup>2)</sup> and the meetings of the European Council (Corfu - June 1994, Essen - December 1994, Cannes - June 1995, Madrid - June 1995) have always a chapter on pre-accession strategy in their agendas.

The main axes of this pre-accession strategy are the following:

↳ the full implementation of the structured relationship or dialogue through joint meetings of an advisory nature with Union's

institutions to address topics of common interest relevant to the three pillars (community policies, common foreign and security policy as well as justice and home affairs);

↳ Preparation for the extension of the internal market, to enable the associated countries to integrate progressively in a wider European market as provided for by the Europe agreements.

A series of measures are being taken following the Essen recommendations. In the short-term, information mechanisms concerning anti-dumping procedures are being implemented. EC Regulation 3036/94 of 08.12.94 concerning duty free re-import of textile products subject to outward processing has been adopted and the Community's trade concessions towards Romania and Bulgaria have been aligned to the Visegrad countries. Consequently, free trade in industrial goods has now virtually been achieved.

Furthermore, to encourage integration and regional cooperation, the Commission has submitted to the Council in December 1995, a

<sup>2)</sup> Hungary (1 April 1994), Poland (8 April 1994), Slovakia (28 June 1994), Romania (22 June 1995), Latvia (13 October 1995), Estonia (28 November 1995), Lithuania (8 December 1995), Bulgaria (16 December 1995), Czech Republic (23 January 96)

1952 EUR 6



199 EUR



draft proposal in order to extend the cumulation possibilities and to harmonise the rules of origin in the different agreements between the Community, the associated CEEC and the EFTA countries.

Medium-term measures are included in the "White Paper on the preparation of the Associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe for integration into the Internal Market of the Union" (COM(95) 163 final) endorsed by the European Council in Cannes.

This paper aims to provide the CEEC with a road-map that identifies in each sector the most important legal texts for the operation of the internal market and describes the administrative and institutional structures necessary for the application of these texts. The alignment process is in the

hands of the Associated countries but its success nevertheless also depends on co-ordinated support from the Union and the Member States.

For this reason a Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office (to which a DG XXI official, Charlotte Pricoupenko, is detached) has been set up with the support of a new PHARE multi-country programme to organise and improve the access of the Associated countries to expertise within the Commission and in the Member States.

Contrary to the title in the White Paper, the chapter on customs union exclusively concentrates on actions designed to ease the steps towards the liberalisation planned under the Europe Agreements by ensuring the approxima-

tion of CEEC's Customs Legislation to the Community's Customs Code and its implementing provisions; the accession to the Conventions on a Common Transit procedure and on the simplification of the formalities in the exchange of goods; the adoption of the Community's Combined Nomenclature; the implementation of the conclusions of the European Councils of Copenhagen and Essen on cumulation of rules of origin and the consolidation of the provisions on mutual administrative assistance. However, such measures will not result in a frontier-free internal market as provided for by the Treaties for the Members of the European Union. Nevertheless, once satisfactory implementation by the CEEC of competition policy and state aids control have been achieved, together with the application of other parts of Community law linked to the Internal Market, the above mentioned customs related measures would be sufficient to facilitate free trade in a wider European market including the enlarged union, the EEA and the Associated countries, with a total population of 450 million!

Furthermore, in the White Paper, it is also indicated that the Commis-

sion will pursue preparations for extending the Matthaues and Matthaues Tax programmes to the Associated countries. The aim is to improve the understanding of the role and responsibilities of the customs and indirect taxation administrations in the Internal Market. This knowledge will be very valuable for the Associated countries in the context of their preparation for accession to the Union.

In this respect, the Madrid European Council called on the Commission to expedite preparations of its opinions on the applications for membership which have been made so that they can be forwarded to the Council as soon as possible after the conclusion of the Inter-governmental Conference.

Therefore, reinforcing the assistance to the countries in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>3)</sup> (via the PHARE - Transit Facilitation and Customs Modernisation Programme and via the subcommittees on customs cooperation under the Europe agreements) to fulfil the required conditions for membership will be a priority for our DG in 1996. Get ready for action!

## IPR - risk analysis of economic conditions

### *The starting point: the Louvain seminar*

**B**oth administrations and business should seriously examine methods to reduce the administrative impact of entering the export related duty relief regime known as Inward Processing Relief (IPR). This was the theme at the Louvain seminar held in October of 1994.

During the seminar various aspects of the regime were examined by representatives from both administrations and trade from all Member states and a number of proposals were put forward to make IPR more "business friendly" - without increasing the risks to customs controls or distortions to trade itself; one of these areas was the application of the economic conditions which justify the granting of relief. The other areas have also been analysed and will be presented later when we will say more about the wind of change blowing through IPR.

During the seminar it was found that the Community's application of the IPR economic conditions could be applied more consistently and in a less burdensome manner to both trade and administrations.

Consequently the seminar considered a number of options in or-

der to apply these conditions in a manner which provided safeguards for EC producers, but at the same time did not burden applicants with unnecessary administration - and therefore obstruct their export competitiveness.

### **What is an "economic test"?**

Article 117(c) of the Customs code indicates that an IPR authorisation can only be granted where this procedure can help create the most favourable conditions for the export or re-export of compensating products and **provided that the essential interests of Community producers are not adversely affected.**

Presently applicants can use IPR almost automatically if their application is for a simple form of handling - such as packaging or repair - or the total value of their IPR import per calendar year is below one of two value trigger points - 150,000 ECUs for agriculture and certain "sensitive" industrial goods or 300,000 ECUs for all other products.

If their application does not fall under one of these two criteria, the application must be examined more carefully under what is known as the economic "test".



This test is nothing more than a comparison between the Community producers interest (with reference to their production information about quantities available on the market, the price level, delivery conditions, etc..) and the interest of the Community processor taken from the details of the inward processing operation as indicated in the application. It has to be clear that, while Community preference is the principle, this test, which is usually made by specialised trade bodies (Ministry of Economic or Agricultural Affairs rather than Customs as such) should give a correct and equitable balance between the two interests.

### **The principle of risk assessment**

In essence, this provides for the "filtering" of the economic importance of a transaction via a "weighting" of its different aspects

in order to weed out the "less important" economic operations and to allow them under a simplified procedure. Thus allowing the "customs authorities" to concentrate fully on the "more important" economic issues.

After a number of discussions in the relevant Section of the Customs Code Committee ("Section for Customs Procedures with Economic Impact") the administrations are now close to finalising a risk analysis method, developed by B6, of determining the likely consequences of any particular economic application.

### **How does it work?**

It goes without saying that, as we do not know the full list of potential readers of this magazine, we are not able to provide the full information due to the confidential nature of the parameters involved.

However, we can say that this "filter" process enhances the existing value trigger system of 150,000 and 300,000 ECUs as the sole means of determining whether the normal economic examination procedures should apply to an IPR request. A number of risk areas, such as, for example, more sensitive goods, are given a nu-

meric risk weighting. This weighting is then multiplied by an appropriate risk factor which is assigned to the economic conditions code<sup>1)</sup> which the applicant himself has requested.

If the final total falls below a pre-determined score, the application may use IPR via the simplified procedure, but if the final tally exceeds the score the application is examined fully under the present procedure.

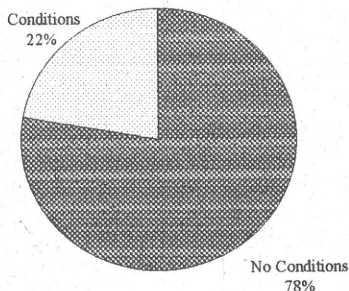
### **Experimental phase**

*Trials of this method are already taking place in Spain, Belgium*

and the UK. These three Member States volunteered to apply the B/6 developed risk assessment formula to all applications received between September and December 1995, alongside the normal procedures provided for by Community law and to inform the Commission of the outcome of the experiment.

Some 224 individual applications were considered, covering nearly 450 different types of goods. All applications were subjected both to the trial method as well as to a normal examination. In fact all were authorised and nearly 80% of all these authorisations required no further specific conditions.

### **BREAKDOWN BETWEEN CASES WHERE THE MEMBER STATES HAD TO SET DISCRETIONARY INDIVIDUAL CONDITIONS AND THE OTHERS**



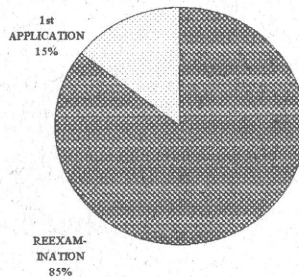
This 'pie' diagram shows that some 80% of cases were "routine" and involved no particular risk

<sup>1)</sup> These codes describe the reason why the goods have to be imported rather than being obtained on the Community market

However a high number of applications were renewals of existing authorisations, meaning operators had to submit a full application -

with supporting evidence - for a second time or more although the original evidence was still current from the previous request.

#### BREAKDOWN OF APPLICATIONS BETWEEN FIRST TIME APPLICANTS AND EXISTING USERS



This shows that effectively the Member States have already looked at 85% of the applicants on an earlier occasion

#### *The results so far*

The result of the experimental phase of the trial indicates that if the risk analysis method had been fully adopted the number of applicants examined under the economic test would have been cut by more than fifty percent without risk to the EC economy.

Consequently if the risk analysis

system was used generally then a significant number of applications would be filtered out at the pre-examination stage greatly reducing the examination work load under the economic "test" for both administrations and businesses. The man hour savings in deciding whether these applications could enter the simplified procedures are quite dramatic as the figures below show:



INDIV - IDUAL GOODS EXAM- INED	FURTHER INFO NEEDED	MEETINGS WITH OPER- ATORS	RESULT OF FULL EXAMINATION			NORMAL EXAM: AVERAGE TIME PER APPLI- CATION (DAYS)	RISK ANALYSIS: AVERAGE TIME PER APPLI- CATION (MINS)
			GOODS AUTHORISED		REJECT		
			NO COND- ITIONS	WITH COND- ITIONS			
431	264	17	304	127	0	20,1	13,20

*From an operator's point of view, the average time of 20 days (includes time for national consultation procedure, e.g. for requesting advice to other specialised bodies) for an application to be examined, would be reduced to 15 minutes by using a risk assessment system, without harming European industry.*

### **The future : the follow-up and the legal aspects**

*The feedback from the volunteer Member States has been analysed and has led to further "refinements" of the risk assessment method and a deeper awareness of the implications of the system. Other Member States have now been invited to try this system on ad-hoc basis if they wish to.*

*These trials are continuing and without "risk" of overconfidence, it is hoped that this method will be put into the law during the summer, bringing a welcome focused, simpler and more consistent approach to applying the economic conditions of IPR authorisations.*

*A further possible simplification using a database system tool will be examined at a later stage for introduction in the longer term together with different other aspects of the regime in order to further harmonise, modernise and simplify the IPR-regime, which is considered to be one of the most "technical"; "complex" (or should it read "complicated") customs regimes.*

Luc T'JOEN and Graham AUSTIN The processing team B-6

## La coordination des ressources propres

**D**ans la ligne que INFO XXI s'est tracée en vue de décrire de façon continue et à grands traits les différentes matières traitées par notre Direction générale, et de mieux connaître en quoi ses fonctionnaires occupent leur temps, on m'a demandé d'expliquer en quoi consiste la "coordination ressources propres". Avec ces trois mots tout court, on doit sous-entendre de manière plus explicite la coordination au sein de la DG XXI, sa participation, le rôle qu'elle joue lors des missions de contrôle des ressources propres dans les Etats membres, ainsi que le suivi de ces missions.

Il convient de préciser tout d'abord que, compte tenu de la distinction entre les ressources propres ayant leur origine dans les droits des douanes et la ressource propre TVA, ladite coordination est partagée entre les Directions B et C, respectivement.

En guise d'introduction, il serait utile de rafraîchir la mémoire des lecteurs en rappelant, ne serait-ce que succinctement, la nature des ressources propres et leur évolution.

Le trajet parcouru durant les presque 40 ans depuis la constitution de la CEE a commencé avec le régime des contributions financi-

ères des Etats membres - et les clefs de répartition entre eux - instauré, à l'instar d'autres organisations supranationales, par l'article 200 du Traité, puis est passé par la création au début des années 70, sur la base de l'article 201 du Traité, d'un véritable système de ressources propres communautaires, se substituant aux dites contributions financières, et a abouti finalement au système hybride actuel caractérisé par un mélange de ressources propres communautaires et de contributions financières des Etats membres.

La décision du 21 avril 1970, en instaurant les ressources propres communautaires, est la conséquence logique de l'union douanière que constitue dorénavant la Communauté européenne. En effet, les droits de douane sont souvent perçus dans un Etat membre autre que celui de destination ou de consommation, et perdent ainsi toute sorte de rattachement avec un Etat membre quelconque, même si l'article 201 prévoyait déjà que "...les contributions financières des Etats membres pourraient être remplacées par des ressources propres, notamment par des recettes provenant du TDC".

À l'heure actuelle, depuis les modifications introduites en 1988, le

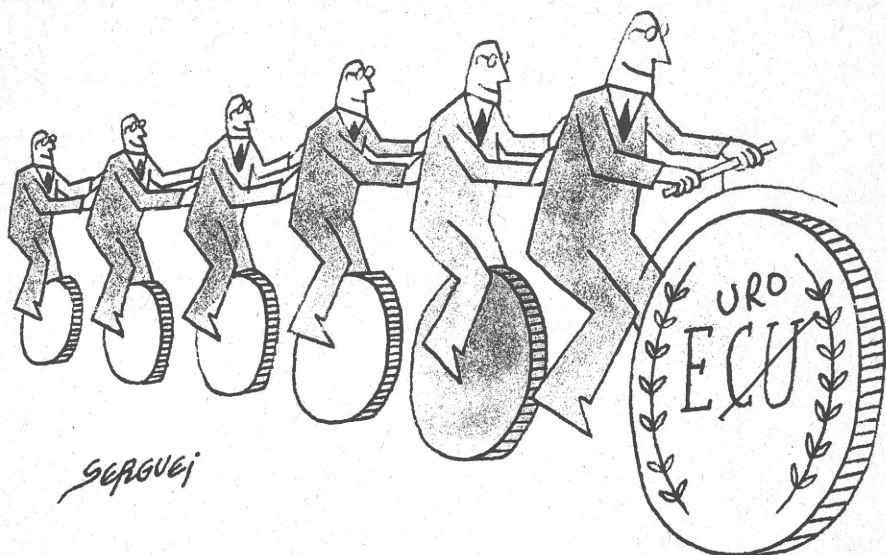
budget des Communautés est donc alimenté, sans préjudice d'autres recettes, par, d'une part, les ressources appelées traditionnelles (droits de douanes, prélèvements agricoles et cotisation sucre), qui constituent de véritables impositions communautaires, et, d'autre part, la ressource TVA - un taux ne pouvant excéder un pourcentage d'une assiette déterminée selon des règles uniformes - et la quatrième ressource, un pourcentage du PNB des Etats membres, toutes les deux constituant des contributions financières des Etats membres. Dans quelques années, dans la perspective d'une modification du système de financement des Communautés européennes à l'occasion de l'union monétaire, nous assisterons peut-être à la naissance d'une cinquième ressource qui reste encore à déterminer.

Le poids des ressources propres traditionnelles devient de plus en plus faible au fur et à mesure que les réductions ou suppressions des droits à l'importation s'élargissent en vertu, soit des préférences accordées aux pays tiers de façon autonome ou conventionnelle, soit des engagements pris dans l'Uruguay Round. Ainsi, le pourcentage des droits de douanes et des prélèvements représentait en 1985 un volume global de ressources de 25 milliards d'écus, soit presque 37% des ressources propres (31% et 6% respectivement)

contre 58% pour la TVA. Il représentait dix ans plus tard un volume global de 66 milliards d'écus, soit seulement 20,21% des ressources propres (18,8% et 1,4%, respectivement) contre 50,3% pour la TVA; le reste, presque dans sa totalité (26,77%) étant constitué par la ressource PNB.

Arrivés à ce stade, il est maintenant opportun de nous centrer sur l'objet de l'exposé, à savoir les ressources propres traditionnelles et le rôle de notre DG. En tant que gardiens des frontières externes de la Communauté, il appartient aux Etats membres de recouvrer ces ressources, conformément à leurs dispositions nationales, tout en respectant néanmoins les règles uniformes relatives au dédouanement des marchandises, et de les mettre ensuite à la disposition de la Communauté, selon la procédure communautaire établie, à l'occurrence celle du règlement n° 1552/89. Ce texte détermine les différentes phases à suivre par les autorités nationales, depuis la constatation jusqu'à la mise à disposition au nom de la Commission des ressources, en passant par la tenue d'une comptabilité et par la conservation des pièces justificatives.

Toutefois, les services de la Commission interviennent également à un autre stade du système, non pas pour légiférer, mais plutôt pour vérifier, soit en association avec les services nationaux, soit



de manière autonome, le respect intégral des phases de perception des ressources propres et leur régularité. Ainsi, la Commission détient, au titre de ses responsabilités en matière d'exécution du budget, tout en s'inscrivant dans le cadre de l'obligation générale de collaboration des Etats membres en vertu de l'article 5 du Traité, un pouvoir de contrôle sur les activités des Etats membres, qui se manifeste dans la pratique par l'exercice de missions, associées ou autonomes, sur place.

Ces contrôles sont la conséquence de la double responsabilité à l'égard des ressources propres, d'un côté des Etats membres vis-à-vis de la Communauté quant à la perception de ces ressources, de l'autre, de la Commission devant les autres instances commu-

nautaires pour ce qui concerne la bonne gestion et l'exécution des recettes budgétaires.

Les contrôles associés sont exercés sur la base de l'article 18, paragraphe 2, du règlement précité, la responsabilité principale de l'organisation (détermination de la date et du lieu du contrôle) appartenant aux Etats membres. Par contre, les contrôles autonomes, également appelés vérifications sur place, permettent à la Commission d'agir de sa propre initiative.

A ces fins, la Commission, en l'occurrence la DG XIX en tant que responsable de l'exécution du budget, élabore chaque année, après concertation et coordination préalable avec les services concernés, un programme de vi-

sites dans les Etats membres, en précisant les thèmes qui feront l'objet de ces visites. Les thèmes ont soit un caractère générique - p. ex. les formalités d'accomplissement de mise en libre pratique, la comptabilisation et la mise à disposition, l'analyse des structures et des procédures administratives mises en place - soit plutôt un caractère spécifique, centré sur un aspect concret de la réglementation douanière, tel que l'origine préférentielle, le transit communautaire, les régimes économiques ou, comme tout récemment, l'application de certains accords bilatéraux (p.ex. Andorre ou Saint Marin).

La présence de notre Direction générale, dans le domaine douanier, est assurée par la participation d'un fonctionnaire en tant qu'agent mandaté, qui est choisi, parmi ceux qui font partie de l'équipe de la DG XXI, en fonction du caractère générique ou spécifique du thème de la mission à réaliser dans chaque Etat membre.

Une fois achevé sur un sujet donné l'ensemble des visites dans les Etats membres, les conclusions qui en sont tirées peuvent donner lieu, dans la mesure où des problèmes similaires sont rencontrés partout et ont été signalés de manière répétitive, à une réflexion de la part des services de la Commission sur les solutions à envisager (amende-

ments des textes législatifs, adoption de notes interprétatives ou d'accords administratifs). A titre d'exemple, le manque de précision juridique de la notion de "doute fondé" dans les règles d'origine préférentielle, qui n'est définie nulle part, peut avoir des repercussions sur le recouvrement des droits à l'importation non exigés lors de l'importation.

L'identification des thèmes de contrôle joue un rôle important pour atteindre les buts recherchés, puisque différents critères objectifs sont pris en compte: les récentes modifications de la réglementation communautaire ou l'entrée en vigueur de nouvelles dispositions en vue de vérifier, d'une part, le degré de leur mise en oeuvre - ou les difficultés rencontrées - et, d'autre part, l'uniformité dans leur application; les observations formulées par la Cour des comptes européenne; les fraudes constatées dans certains domaines; le degré de risque sous l'angle financier; enfin, l'analyse des risques liés aux régimes douaniers censés être les plus importants en termes d'incidence sur les droits à l'importation. On peut citer, à ce propos, un exemple qui montre la nécessité des contrôles. Ainsi, les visites réalisées aux fins de vérifier comment les Etats membres concernés par l'application de l'Accord avec Andorre, ont mis en évidence non seulement des carences ou des insuffi-

sances de certaines parties de l'Accord, mais aussi des procédures divergentes dans l'application de cet accord.

De même, le choix des endroits à visiter est motivé par une analyse identifiant les endroits les plus opportuns du point de vue des thèmes en question.

Les résultats des visites de contrôle effectuées au long de l'année font l'objet d'un rapport détaillé et précis, qui rassemble les différentes contributions des agents mandatés participant aux missions. Ce rapport est ensuite transmis à l'Etat membre où la visite a eu lieu afin qu'il puisse répondre aux observations y contenues et qu'il puisse formuler à son tour ses observations si une pratique incorrecte ou contraire à la réglementation communautaire lui est reprochée.

Chaque rapport, accompagné de la réponse de l'Etat membre concerné, fait plus tard l'objet d'une analyse par les agents mandatés et par le groupe interservices avant d'être soumis pour

examen au Comité Consultatif des Ressources Propres, dont les réunions ont lieu deux fois par an et auquel participent tous les Etats membres. Au cours de ces réunions, les Etats membres ont encore la possibilité de formuler des observations mais si les divergences subsistent, ils sont à ce moment avertis de la mise en oeuvre des actions pertinentes de la part des services de la Commission - demande de recouvrement des droits ou des intérêts de retard, demande d'adaptation des instructions nationales pour se conformer à la législation communautaire etc.. - pouvant arriver, le cas échéant, à l'ouverture d'une procédure d'infraction à l'encontre du pays en cause.

Pour conclure, les gains qu'on peut retirer des visites de contrôle effectuées prennent la forme d'un enrichissement tant du point de vue personnel (aspect relations humaines), que du point de vue professionnel, par l'apport non négligeable à la simple théorie, de connaissances pratiques en matière de procédures suivies dans les Etats membres.

Enrique MARIÑO RODRIGUEZ

## HAPPENINGS

### “Funeral home” or “Significant contribution....”

**S**anctions have been compared to a funeral home: you use them when you must but nobody likes them. It has also often been heard that “sanctions do not work” because they are too easy to circumvent and because the ruling class in the country concerned will always be capable of ensuring its own well-being. Sanctions have also been accused of causing harm to the civilian population by hindering the delivery of food and medicine.

If all this were true one would expect that sanctions would not be used as an instrument for achieving the political goals of the United Nations Security Council. However, the UN did impose sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY includes Serbia and Montenegro) and those areas held by Bosnian Serb forces. The results of these sanctions are there for everybody to see.

Economically, the sanctions caused severe disruption to the economy of FRY. This can be illustrated by a statement made during the Conference Crans Monta-

na Forum in Malta in October 1995 by Mr. Sainovic, Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Mr. Sainovic said that the U.N. sanctions have cost the country 80 billion dollars and have reduced production so much that the annual per capita income has slumped from 2.500 US \$ to 1.000 US \$.

Seen from the humanitarian view point, it is important to note that the sanctions did not restrict the supply of food and medicines into FRY and the procedures for crossing the border were un-bureaucratic. The shortages of food and medicines that occurred in some areas were all caused by military actions or local militia who blocked the progress of the convoys. It must also be mentioned that the sanctions did not cause widespread death and destruction and that they did not cause hundreds of thousands of persons to become fugitives seeking asylum in other countries. Last, but not least, the EU/OSCE Sanctions Assistance Missions have been able to operate since 1992 without incurring a single casualty.

*The sanctions have had a limiting effect on military operations. Under the sanctions normal commercial supplies of fuel were stopped and fuel shortages occurred although some fuel was brought in by smugglers. In 1995 when the Croatian army attacked or liberated the sectors held by the "Krajina Serbs" Dr. Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, stated that his forces were unable to come to the assistance of the "Krajina Serbs" because of a lack of fuel.*

*Politically, the sanctions had a significant influence on the policies of the governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and of the Bosnian Serbs. Suspension of the sanctions was a primary objective for President Milosevic during the proximity talks in Dayton and negotiations only got under way after he had received assurances that sanctions would be suspended upon the successful conclusion of the talks.*

*That the sanctions "worked" is confirmed by resolution 1022 (1995) in which the United Nations Security Council welcomed the initialling of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and suspended the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). In the resolution the Security Council pays tribute to the neighbouring States,*

*the ICFY Mission, the EU/OSCE Sanctions Co-ordinator, the Sanctions Communications Centre (SAMCOMM) and the EU/OSCE Sanctions Assistance Missions (SAMs), the Western European Union operation on the Danube and the NATO/WEU Sharp Guard operation in the Adriatic Sea for their significant contribution to the achievement of a negotiated peace.*

*It would have been well deserved if the Security Council had also paid tribute to the many persons in the customs administrations of the participating countries who have made such an important contribution in terms of personnel and logistics support to the SAMs. One of these persons, Mr. Tom Adams from the US Customs Service, received a SAMCOMM Award of Merit.*

### ***"Credible mechanism for re- imposition"***

*Resolution 1022 (1995) foresees that if at any time either the High Representative (Mr. Carl Bildt) or the commander of the international force (Admiral Leighton Smith) informs the Security Council via the Secretary-General that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or the Bosnian Serb authorities are failing significantly to meet their obligations under the Peace Agreement the suspension of the sanctions shall terminate on the*



*sanctions shall terminate on the fifth day following the Council's receipt of such a report, unless the Council decides otherwise.*

*This means that until the sanctions are finally terminated by the Security Council it is necessary to maintain a credible mechanism for reimposition of them, taking into account that there will only be a five day lead time from the day the Security Council receives the report on significant non-compliance and the day of re-entry into force of the sanctions. The enforcement or assistance structures - notably the EU/OSCE Sanctions Assistance Missions (SAMs), the Western European Union operation on the Danube and the NATO/WEU Sharp Guard operation in the Adriatic Sea - will therefore need to be maintained although with a reduced staffing and budgets corresponding to the limited tasks during the period of suspension of the sanctions.*

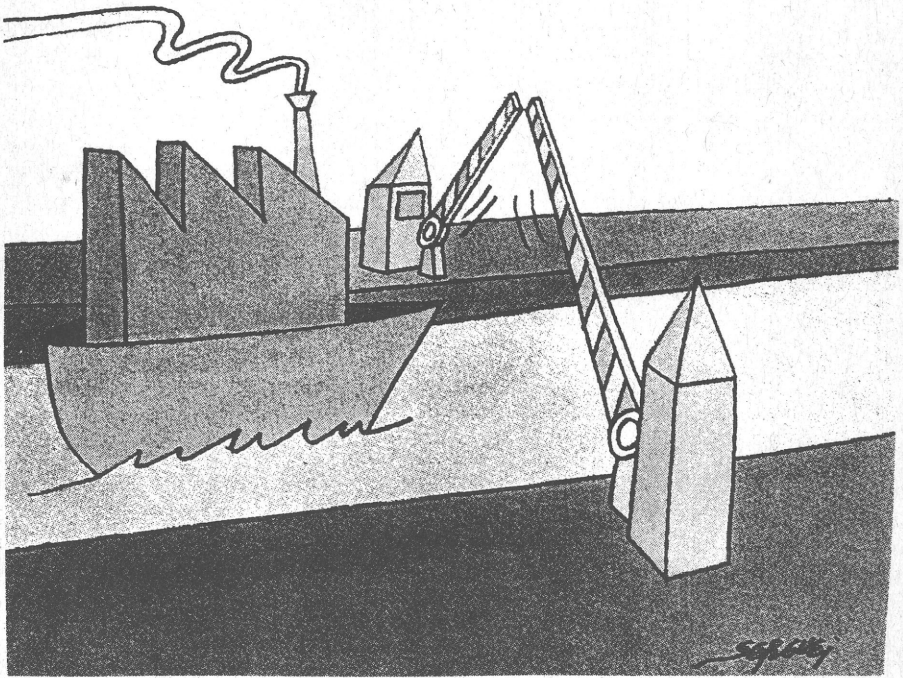
*SAMCOMM in cooperation with the EU/OSCE Sanctions Co-ordinator has established proposals for budget and for staffing of the SAMs, and on 25 January 1996 the OSCE Permanent Council has approved the 1996 budgets of the SAMs and of the Sanctions Co-ordinator's Office. The mandates of the SAMs and of the Sanctions*

*Coordinator have been extended until 30 June 1996. It was also decided to carry out a temporary withdrawal of SAM Ukraine. The Permanent Council has made it clear that it expects that the funds available under the budgets will be spent on a pro rata basis although the budgets have been established for the whole of 1996. In late May 1996 the question of a further extension of the mandates will need to be addressed. The WEU Council has also adopted a decision regarding the staffing of the WEU operation on the Danube.*

*The SAMs' staff will be reduced from 205 to 30 customs officers, whereas the WEU Danube operation's staff will be reduced from 254 to 150 customs and police officers. In case of reimposition of sanctions the countries have pledged to bring their officers back very quickly.*

*The ICFY Mission<sup>1)</sup> is deployed in the FRY with a view to assisting the Yugoslav authorities in controlling the closure of the border to the Bosnian Serbs. The Commission via SAMCOMM funds the senior customs adviser and 20 customs experts of the ICFY Mission. As the sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs are still in force it has not been possible to reduce the staf-*

<sup>1)</sup> ICFY is the acronym for the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia



ing of the ICFY Mission.

Although the sanctions have been suspended, the SAM officers are not idle. They prepare for the two scenarios - withdrawal or reimposition - and are tasked by SAMCOMM with customs assistance and liaison projects within the resources available. SAM Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continues to receive requests for assistance with regard to investigation of suspected violations of sanctions but has difficulties in carrying out these requests with the few staff available to the mission. SAMCOMM has therefore ad-

vised countries that they should consider seconding an officer to the SAM for the time necessary to obtain the information they need for their prosecution of sanctions violations.

### **SAMCOMM activities**

SAMCOMM is fully funded by the European Commission and does not need an OSCE budget or mandate which explains why the OSCE Permanent Council did not mention SAMCOMM in its decision. The budget of SAMCOMM is in place for 1996 and a limited budget has been requested for 1997.

*It is expected that it will be possible to reduce the 1996 SAMCOMM budget during the year, provided that there is no reimposition of sanctions and provided that the level of compliance with the Peace Agreement remains so high that the Security Council decides to suspend the remaining sanctions against the Bosnian Serb held areas. A budget saving can in particular be obtained if the ICFY Mission is withdrawn. Such budget savings could then be used for the large reconstruction effort that is being undertaken by the European Union and other members of the international community.*

*The suspension of sanctions will naturally have a certain impact on the tasks of SAMCOMM and on the level of staff necessary. Some seconded SAMCOMM officers have already been withdrawn by their governments and as the work load relating to the investigation of suspected sanctions violations diminishes further staff reductions will become possible.*

*However, there can be no question of a quick dismantling of SAMCOMM which ensures the operational co-ordination of the SAMs, coordinates over 8000 active investigations and is the custodian of more than 14000 cases of suspected violations of sanctions. Furthermore, SAMCOMM has posted a Liaison Officer, Mr. Charles Dunbavand, to the Uni-*

*ted Nations and a Liaison Officer, Mr. Allan Jensen, to Bosnia-Herzegovina.*

*The Liaison Officer in New York advises the Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991), also called the Yugoslavia Sanctions Committee. It is under active consideration whether he shall also advise the Iraq Sanctions Committee whose tasks will be significantly expanded if an arrangement is made enabling Iraq to export fuel products and use part of the proceeds for buying food and medicines.*

*The experience of the UN Liaison Officer and SAMCOMM has contributed to streamlining the 724 Committee's procedures whereby legitimate trade has been greatly facilitated. More can be done in this area but the relevant proposals put forward by SAMCOMM appear to have been overtaken by the suspension of sanctions.*

*The Liaison Officer in Sarajevo, Mr. Allan Jensen, carries out liaison functions and is also tasked to assist with the building of a customs service in accordance with what was laid down in the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

*The posting to Sarajevo of Mr. Allan Jensen has been welcomed by Mr. Sacirbey, Minister of Foreign*

*Affairs of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The posting is also appreciated by international organisations. The World Customs Organization has been engaged by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to conduct a mission on customs operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and has asked that Mr. Jensen be allowed to assist as a member of the WCO team. SAMCOMM has agreed to the request and has made available our experience relating to analysis of border crossing points.*

### **Future**

*It is our firm hope that the Peace Agreement will succeed, that sanctions will soon be suspended also with regard to the Bosnian Serb forces held areas, that there will be no reimposition of sanctions and that eventually all the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and those areas held by Bosnian Serb forces will be terminated. When that happens the EU/OSCE Sanctions Assistance Missions will be closed and their EU-funded equipment will be donated to the host countries.*

*The SAMs have not only provided valuable sanctions assistance to the host countries, they have also been an international network of*

*customs cooperation. The closure of the SAMs will be a blow to the international customs cooperation in the area and the European Commission would be well advised to consider stationing customs attachés in its delegations in the countries that the SAMs will be leaving.*

*Through their successful implementation in the conflict in Former Yugoslavia sanctions have earned their place as one of the available instruments to the international community's policy makers and in particular the UN Security Council. In some cases the policies of a government may even be influenced by the perspective that the country will face effective sanctions if the leaders persist with a course of action that is condemned by the international community.*

*Many lessons have been learnt during the three and a half years of implementation of the Yugoslav sanctions and SAMCOMM is in the process of compiling a contribution to a possible "Round Table on Sanctions" that may be organised later in 1996. Two diplomats from SAM host countries, Mr. Tanasa from Romania and Mrs. Abraham Nagyi from Hungary, will assist in this work under the supervision of Mr. Richard Stone and myself.*

*Richardt VORK - Director of SAMCOMM*

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## POST BOX 21

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*Dear Editor,*

*Issue No 25 contained Mr Wilmott's review of the last five or so years in DG XXI. This could have given us a rare bird's-eye view of what we have collectively achieved in that time, and placed things in some kind of proportion. Although the review is too personal to do that, it still remains an interesting enough statement and, in part, expresses what many of us probably feel.*

*I do not however share Mr Wilmott's opinion that very little overall "esprit de corps" exists in the Commission. Nor do I welcome the aspersions cast on the dedication of large numbers of the staff.*

*In my experience, the spirit which we have in the Community institutions is no less positive and forceful than that in the national administration which I anyway come from. What are the ingredients of an "esprit de corps"? A collective will to perform to the highest standards, a collective self-respect, an individual sense of "belonging" ... One can find in any number of groups and committees involving Community officials of different units or institutions that these officials are not only anxious to achieve results, but also to do that to the best of their ability. A look at these same officials on a mission away from their base would probably reveal that their feeling of belonging to a "corps" is even greater than it is at home. One usually finds such a spirit also in Community groupings which include Member State representatives. If everyone involved is to feel part of the "corps", then each one needs to know that their own presence and contribution is truly appreciated. Elitism or high-handed management would damage the integrity of the group, and the group spirit would inevitably suffer. In any multinational organisation, it is particularly important to treat all nationalities as equals and to respect their idiosyncracies - to avoid treading on anyone's*

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*toes, whatever their place in the organisation. Clearly the attitude of managers exerts an important influence on the resulting spirit. Does all that apply here? I think that it has existed here for years, but that it is better when we collectively care for it.*

*I wish Mr Wilmott and his successor well in their future activities.*

*John DE NEUMANN B-6*

\* \* \*



Tony,

*A well-wisher, who spends much of his time intercepting faxes destined for others, thought you might be amused by the enclosed.*

*Doubtless you, like the well-wisher, will be even more interested in the reply!*

*Something to be shared with colleagues, perhaps?*



Reader's Digest House  
61 Curzon Street  
London W1Y 7PE  
Great Britain

**EUROPEAN EDITORIAL OFFICE**

FACSIMILE

Date: 26 February, 1996

TO: Alexander Wiedow

FROM: Christopher Evans

TEL: (+44) 171 409 5769  
FAX: (+44) 171 409 5751

Number of pages including cover sheet: 1

SUBJECT: European VAT Directives.

**VERY URGENT!**

Dear Mr Wiedow,

I wonder whether you can confirm the following:

1. The VAT Directive (which one?) which exists to harmonise VAT systems in Europe has 70 provisions.
2. Member states do not have to implement these provisions.
3. There are a further 125 provisions.
4. These are mandatory, but can be dropped by the member states.
5. The combination of the above means that there are at least 2000 variations in EU VAT systems.

Many thanks for your help,

Yours sincerely,



Christopher Evans.

# "ENTRE NOUS"



**We welcome the colleagues who have joined DG XXI since our last edition:**

**Officials:**

James CURRIE	GB	Director General
Gillian KENNY	IRL	C-4
Ursula KRAMPE	DE	B-6
Anne-Marie MICHELS	BE	Dir C

**Interims:**

Anina HERTELL	FIN	B-7
Christel CUYPERS	BE	Sec

**National experts:**

Mario FIORENTINO	IT	C-3
Marja KANGAS	FIN	B-2

**Auxiliaries**

Marie-Christina BARATTA	IT	B-5
Virginie BLYWEERT	FR	B-7
Maurizio KOSIR	IT	B-5

**Temporary Agent:**

Bo FORVASS	S	C-3
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**Internal DG XXI movements:**

Martine BOUMON-MEGANCK	01	→ B-2
Eduardo DE LA PEÑA	B-7	→ B-1
Anne DE WOLF	A-3	→ B-6



Jean-Michel GRAVE	01 → B-2
Keith MARSCHALL	AUX → PREST
Javier MUGURUZA	END → AUX
Gerald SPAIN	END → AUX

**and we say goodbye to those who have left us:**

**Officials:**

Elizabeth CATZEL	GB → DG IX
Françoise COLLET	FR → DG I
Anne DE ULEESCGOUWER	BE → DG IX
Loes GEERAERD	BE → DG I B
Valère MOUTARLIER	FR → DG II
Mario NAVA	IT → DG XIX
Regina SCHRÖDER	D → DG I A
Eladio VALLINA	ES → DG XIX

**Auxiliaries:**

Carmen MARTIN ROMERO	ES
Marie SEREN	GB

**Interims:**

Andrée GOVAERTS	BE
Kristina MANDIUS	S
Anne OUSSATOFF	BE
Pilar RUIZ	ES
Claudia VISOCCHI	IT

**Temporary Agents:**

Maria Concetta CERAFOLLI	IT
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**Welcome to all our stagiaires of all kinds**

Mona ALDESTAM	SW	DIR B
Andrea BILLI	IT	B-1
Gérald CHENAU	CH	DIR B
Jana CIBULKOVA	Czech	B-4
Inesa CINELYTE	LIT	A-1
Bernd GASSNER	AUS	C-3
Mauro GIFFONI	IT	DIR B
Helena GUARDIOLA	ES	A-2
Diana JOUANJEAN	FR	02

Robert KAZIMIERCZUK	POL	DIR B
John MIFSUD	MALT	B-4
Nuno NEVES	PT	DIR C
Tamas ORY	HUNG	C-3
Jozef RAJTAR	SLOVA	Dir B
Heike RICHTER	DE	C-1
Harri SEESKARI	FIN	B-3
Zeki TÜYEN	TURK	A-3
Mateja VRANICAR	SLOVE	
Anna YALLOURAKIS	EL	02

\*

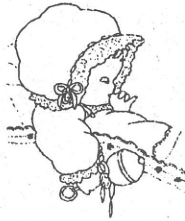
\*   \*   \*

*Dissimulée parmi les "arrivals" on trouve une ligne avec un commentaire sybillin qui concerne James CURRIE. Prière de ne pas oublier qu'il ne s'agit pas de notre nouveau DG anglais puisqu'il est écossais et que si les écossais sont peut-être britanniques et viennent du Royaume-Uni, ils ne sont pas anglais!*

*Those of you 'in house' will have seen what he looks like, from our special edition 25%, but for the benefit of the rest of our readers here is a picture, but he is not unknown in other parts of the Commission.*



# *Congratulations*



## **C A D I Z THE SEQUEL**

Do you remember the guy  
(He came from the Commission)  
Who'd forgotten his bike?  
(Not the one with a mission)

Well I've just heard the news  
I think its real neat  
He will soon hear the patter  
Of tiny little feet

Congratulations to all  
But the question now is,  
Did it happen after, before  
or during Cadiz.

See "Free Zone Monitoring Visit" - XXInfo 23 P. 15

*Congratulations to:*

*Jacqueline Van Noordenne and Albert Hendriks (B-6),  
proud parents of Matthijs Isaac, born on 7 February 1996,*



## Whither WCO?

**T**he WCO (CCC to us older people) has been giving its local supporters an unsettling time recently. Rumour had it that points East or even North (The Hague) were being offered as a new home when the Brussels lease expires in 1998. At present the Belgian Government pays half the rent on the building in the rue de l'Industrie and were not prepared to continue to be so generous. In any case the WCO will need to move as the building, like ours, needs refurbishing.

So where will Alberto and his merry crew, not forgetting John Malone, Antonio Alarcon Canones, Richard Van Raan and others, be going on mission in two years time? To Bonn perhaps? The German Government stepped in with an offer of free accommodation in Bonn and to cover the costs of moving there. The German Government is of course moving to Berlin in stages and needs something to fill the empty buildings left

behind and to provide employment. This at least prompted the Belgians to reconsider and to offer to pay half of the rent of a new building in Brussels.

At a personnel level apart from the disruption to the lives of the 135 or so staff of the WCO and their families, the move would mean extra costs to DG XXI (and more staff as people would be away from their desks longer?) and more customs Attaches for the Member States, among others, as Customs Attaches in Brussels tend to cover both the Community and the WCO.

Taking all this into account it seems that the odds are on Mr Shaver and his band staying put. Perhaps the transport connections and the restaurants have tipped the scales. Could Rheinischer Sauerbraten compete with the haute cuisine of Brussels, meeting point of so many culinary traditions.

*Our special and anonymous correspondent to the WCO*

## Une seule réponse ... pour deux

**L**e plus haut fonctionnaire de la DG ayant "filé à l'anglaise", le menu staff, non présent au "lunch given by the heads of unit", a raté l'occasion de lui faire personnellement ses adieux.

Lors de cet événement, l'auteur de l'Editorial du dernier "Info" a cru bon de lui rendre un hommage collectif en s'octroyant le droit de représenter la pensée de toute la DG sur le fameux contentieux.

Je ne sais pas combien d'entre

nous ont apprécié cette initiative. Prendre position dans un article, qui n'est pas signé et qui engage donc la responsabilité de la rédaction, nuit à la neutralité affichée par le bulletin. En outre, cela heurte la sensibilité de ceux qui n'ont pas (ou n'ont pas envie d'avoir) une opinion là-dessus... et, plus encore, de ceux qui ont un avis tout à fait différent, comme c'est mon cas.

Je souhaite donc ne pas m'associer audit hommage.

Pasquale MICONI - 01

P.S.: Je constate, à la page 9 du même bulletin, que ledit haut fonctionnaire, désormais ex, a le bon goût de rappeler "the old joke: how many people work in the Commission? On a good day, about half", pour en conclure que cela "contains more than a grain of truth", vu la présence (à 50%?) de "lazy people and hyperactive incompetents" (sic!). Puisqu'il nous avait habitués par le passé à des éloges de fin d'années adressés sans exception à "all of you", faut-il croire que, jusqu'à présent, il était distrait, ou que cela s'inscrit dans une campagne de presse déjà bien entamée ailleurs?

P.M.

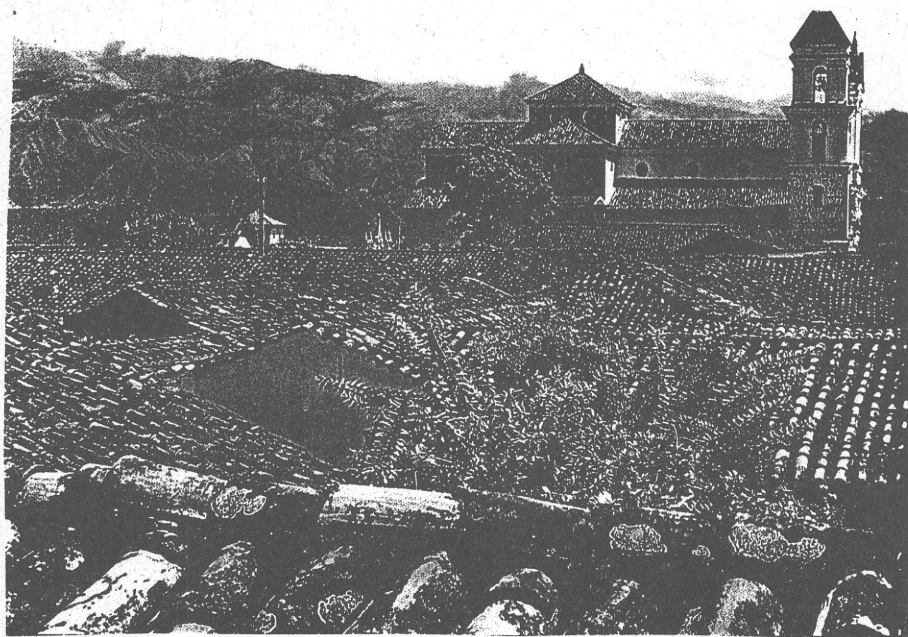
## Something a little different

*L*ong ago I had decided that I could not face the idea of being cooped up on my own in my flat for two weeks at the end of the year and that it was necessary to "get away". But I had no clear idea on where I should go, after all there are so many places where I haven't been. However fate intervened in the shape of a friend who had decided to return home for a holiday after spending two years in Brussels. She preferred to escape in the winter as she doesn't like the cold greyness that cloaks everything in these parts and because it is just then that the best weather occurs back home. She reckoned that there was no point on being alone separately and that she could guide me in her part of the world - given that few speak English and that I don't speak Spanish, we have a "lingua franca". Most of South America is in the southern hemisphere but Columbia for the most part lies just in the northern. Thus while the sun was saying good-bye to Rio de Janeiro and starting on its trek North, life in Columbia is, relatively dry and cool. This is the time of year they describe as "verano" (summer) even if geographically it is mid-winter like up here. It is the time the children get a long break from school and when, if you are rich enough, you take your holidays. So it seemed

to both of us that it was a good excuse.

One of the great disadvantages of the map that famous Belgian Mercator has made so well known, (because it is so nice and square,) is that the further you move from the equator the more exaggerated the area covered becomes. On that kind of map Columbia is about the size of France with 80% the people, some 25 million, squashed into a thickly populated mountainous area about the size of England. One understands why they live in the mountains: it is cooler up there. Forget it, in reality Columbia is roughly the size of Spain, France and Germany put together, and the mountainous bit alone is the size of France. True it is thickly populated, but only in small portions where it is extremely populated; these are called cities. People tend to live in Bogata and the upland plains surrounding it 6 million they say. Medellin, and its associated cities of Bello and Itagüi, account for another 3 million or so. The third city, Cali, has 1½ million and Barranquilla on the Atlantic coast has 1 million. This doesn't leave very many people over to inhabit the rest of the space, which is why it is mostly deserted as it is too wet, hot, dry or steep. Even where they do live, it tends

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 The roofs of Santa Fé de Antioquia


be next to each other in villages strung out along the few roads. But "my" Columbia" is not necessarily the next person's Columbia. For instance I was talking to a colleague who has recently arrived from Sweden who has been there as well, and I don't think we had a single place in common except for Bogata airport! This was the only place we both knew well, as we had spent so long there waiting for connections in and out.

I was actually extremely lucky as I stayed not in hotels in the standard tourist places but with family

friends in the upper barrio of Bello just outside Medellin to the North. It meant that we used the taxis and the "collectivos" (a sort of minibus taxi/bus), the metro (just opened and a tourist attraction for South Americans in its own right) as well as, apparently unusual for a tourist, hiring a car. My new friends were a trifle apprehensive about this as they were not sure that "gringos" could survive off the 'TV freeways' among the cut and thrust of competition with yellow cabs, trucks and holes in the road, plus the donkeys and the breakdowns of Latin America.

*I did assure them that driving in Belgium was perhaps the finest training in the world for this.*

*Anyway we survived without a scratch or heart attack, although from time to time some felt a little sick. Unfortunately that is standard over there; everyone weaves for advantage on mountain passes, usually in clouds of diesel fumes emanating from the artistically painted wonder express bus creeping up the mountain trying to overtake the overloaded forty year old trucks stubbornly sticking to the centre of the road in the teeth of oncoming traffic swooping, as far as possible, down the same mountain. All this in a clapped out Renault 19 at 2000 metres where there isn't enough oxygen left to encourage the engine anyway. It's even better at night - no lighting, no rails, no white lines, no cats-eyes, just the seemingly never-ending flashing of oncoming lights burning in every direction but always into your eyes, followed by a blinding blackness. Is this because the road is empty? Or because you are looking out over 1000 metres of vertical drop? Is it your chance to get past, or your end? Too late, the guy behind takes the risk and is halfway past. I soon learnt that 40 kilometres per hour is an extremely fast rate of travel and why people prefer to take the plane if they can.*

*So our trips were less ambitious, one took us north to the old colonial style capital of this region of Antioquia, a small gem of preserved old white single-storey but high buildings in a few blocks clustered around the central square with the shops and cathedral. Here we visited the one of the oldest suspension bridges in the Americas, where today only one car at a time is allowed to make the 500 metre crossing. Luckily it is not a main road. They have had troubles recently with their bridges and at least two important ones have just... 'collapsed'. The problem is that often there is no convenient alternative route, the one that exists can be 2 or 300 kilometres further using unmade-up surfaces through areas not completely cleared of one or both of their major terrorist groups. As I am writing this the papers are reporting the abduction of three European engineers and their Columbian companion. Luckily, on this and on other occasions, we were able to take our colonial style ease in a good restaurant under thatched roof set among watered lawns followed by a luxurious and long wallow in the pool before setting off again. The middle of the day, especially down in a river valley can be uncomfortably warm if there is no shade and water. Up in the grey green mountains, mixing even occasionally with the clouds themselves, one is much more*



comfortable, though at times it is verging on the chilly. One sees why in 1826 they moved the capital of Antioquia province from Santa Fe de Antioquia to Medellin, some 1000 metres higher (at 1490 metres) on the other side of the mountains.

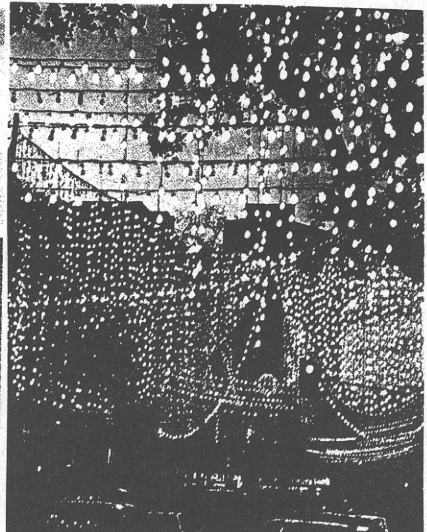
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Some people in Medellin are obviously rather well off. Just take a look at what is on offer and at what prices in the shopping malls that rival those of Singapore, - well guarded by gates and shotgun guards. But it doesn't pay to be too ostentatious, as it makes you a potential target for envy and theft. There are big houses in

green lawns but you don't see them too easily; there are areas where tall apartment blocks rival those of Brussels, but there are many more areas of shanty towns down along the river and the route of the Metro. According to the official figures 17 per cent live in extreme poverty and 27 per cent have less than the minimum income. The newspapers report that a family of five would need two minimum incomes in order to make ends meet. The rest are in between: a growing middle class but not necessarily living in the conditions that we could accept as appropriate for this status. One thing is very obvious: success and status go even less hand-in-hand



El Peñol, near Medellin



Medellin, Christmas illumination

*with ability there than they do here. Wealth gives education, and education is the key to top jobs. It helps as well if you know somebody as well! Breaking out of this viscous circle is difficult, but even though more than half the population is less than 21 years old there are signs that family sizes are dropping to only one or two because it is perceived that you can support that number (and it is difficult to educate 6 or 8).*

*Medillin is an industrial city generally with textile factories making clothes of good quality. It was founded back in 1616 but there is not much left from so long ago. Nethertheless it has a wealth of other industrial activities. There is a great mix of shops from department stores, with goods at reasonable prices in local terms to exclusive trendy clothes shops. The leather goods are good and cheap as well, but you might find that the shoes you bought were Italian! "Down town", which is surprisingly small for a city of more than two million, is a bustling, teeming mix of old, not so old and tower blocks that could have come from Frankfurt. The pavements full of kiosks and tables selling anything from doughnuts to slices of mango with salt. They do a roaring trade, especially anyone selling anything a little cool and liquid. They do not believe the old British Army rule that if you are hot*

*you should drink a hot drink (the Army believes that drinking a cold one only brings temporary relief but later just brings you out in a sweat). Thus oddly enough it is difficult to get a cup of coffee, although they grow it all around and it is probably the best going! Just behind these commercial areas are the buildings of at least one of the three universities. These are classical buildings that one could find anywhere in Europe, but the trees in the square are palm trees. The medical school is said to be the best in South America. However it was the long vacation so the students, who are said in the guide books to be 'flourishing', were not in evidence.*

*My first excursion downtown was at night to see the Christmas lighting. No description I could give in words could begin to say how beautiful and magical it was. Across the centre of town there is one wide street with two carriage-ways and in between huge old trees. The trees are draped with hanging chains of light bulbs of various colours and when they are turned on it is as light as under the full tropical sun. There are also Father Christmases made from hanging strings on which red bulbs are suspended, at least 20 metres high! Under all this there are stalls selling everything you can imagine. It is still hot and the air shivers with the noise made by so many*

*people and the ubiquitous noises of all the different South American dance rhythms.*

*South of Medellin is the city of Itagüi, although you would need to be an expert on local geography to spot where they joined. There the 'Parque' or town plaza is given over each year to the largest model scene depicting the Nativity (Crêche de santons in French and Belen or Nacimiento in Spanish) that I ever hope to see. In Spain I am told they tend to be more extensive than the simple crib with a few figures one finds in France. In Columbia, depending on how you feel, you tend to reconstruct as much of Bethlehem and the surrounding area as you have space for. It is fascinating to see the models in people's houses or in their gardens, all the different.... But enough. In Itagüi the town Nacimiento is made up of hundreds of figures of people and animals in a very desert Arab Bethlehem with trees and houses, ponds and fields. The figures are about 50 centimetres high and most are animated by a system of*

*strings and pulleys attached to an engine buried in the middle of the sands. But it is 100 metres long by 20 metres wide! Baby Jesus is in there somewhere! Of course with 50.000 people all trying to see it at the same time you take a long time to make the tour, with a two and a half year old on your shoulders misusing his candy floss (barbapapa). And it is still hot even though it is now eleven o'clock at night. You were all in deep sleep at five o'clock on a cold winter's morning!*

*As I said at the start it was all very different. Although I saw more of Columbia than parts of Antiquoia, the English speaking Caribbean island of St Andres with the Scottish flag everywhere and, among others, Santa Marta on the Atlantic coast, the oldest surveying Spanish city in Columbia founded in 1525. There is a whole lot I didn't see that the tourists normally visit, while on the other hand they don't see what I saw. So I will have to go back. Then what about southern South America? I shall have to learn Spanish.*

**EN BREF****Result of the last "new caption" competition (continued)**

*Tell me, Tony darling, how long have you been growing that ridiculous flower out of the back of your head?*

A late entry to the last (ever?) caption competition

## Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

*Lors de "fouilles" faites dans mon unité, Manuela Cabral a retrouvé le texte annexé. Il serait intéressant pour les nouveaux fonctionnaires de voir ce qu'on pensait en 1962!!*

Luigi CASELLA - B-2

### PROCES - VERBAL

de la réunion du Comité des Problèmes Douaniers  
qui s'est tenue à Bruxelles le 25 octobre 1962

sous la présidence de M. CARON

Le Directeur Général du Marché Intérieur, M. MILLET, résume la discussion :

- il importe de redresser l'opinion selon laquelle l'essentiel des tâches douanières est accompli; cette erreur est à l'origine de l'insuffisance des moyens en personnel dans les services de la Direction des Douanes;
  - le Comité doit prendre la responsabilité des réalisations nécessaires en vue de terminer l'union douanière d'ici le 1er janvier 1967, au moins pour l'essentiel;
  - à cette fin, il devrait en premier lieu associer ses compétences pour éviter la dilution des responsabilités en matière de douane, et préparer les dispositions à prendre sur le plan national;
  - en tout état de cause, les Directeurs Généraux devraient pouvoir s'accorder lors de leur prochaine réunion (15 novembre) sur un plan d'harmonisation des régimes douaniers établi en fonction des urgences ainsi que sur l'organisation du travail au niveau des groupes d'experts;
- Indépendamment de la question générale du rapprochement des régimes douaniers, les Directeurs Généraux se déclarent d'accord pour étudier des mesures libérales en faveur des usagers, notamment en ce qui concerne le contrôle des voyageurs dans les trains.

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*Responsibility for the articles  
published rests with their authors*

*All articles or information for the next edition must be sent  
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**1 June 1996**, if possible in electronic form  
by Route 400 to either Herbert Griffiths or Ida Perez.*

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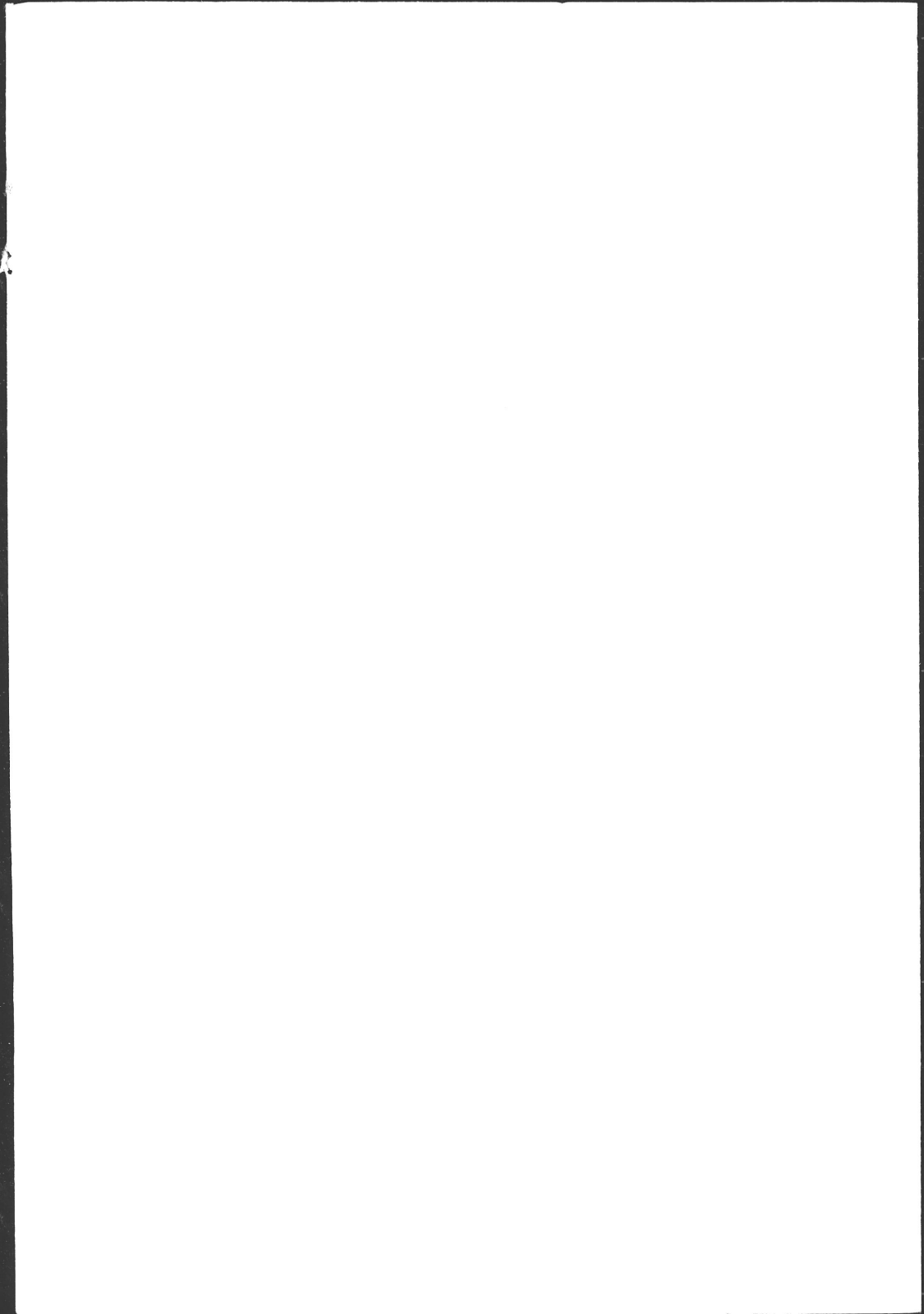
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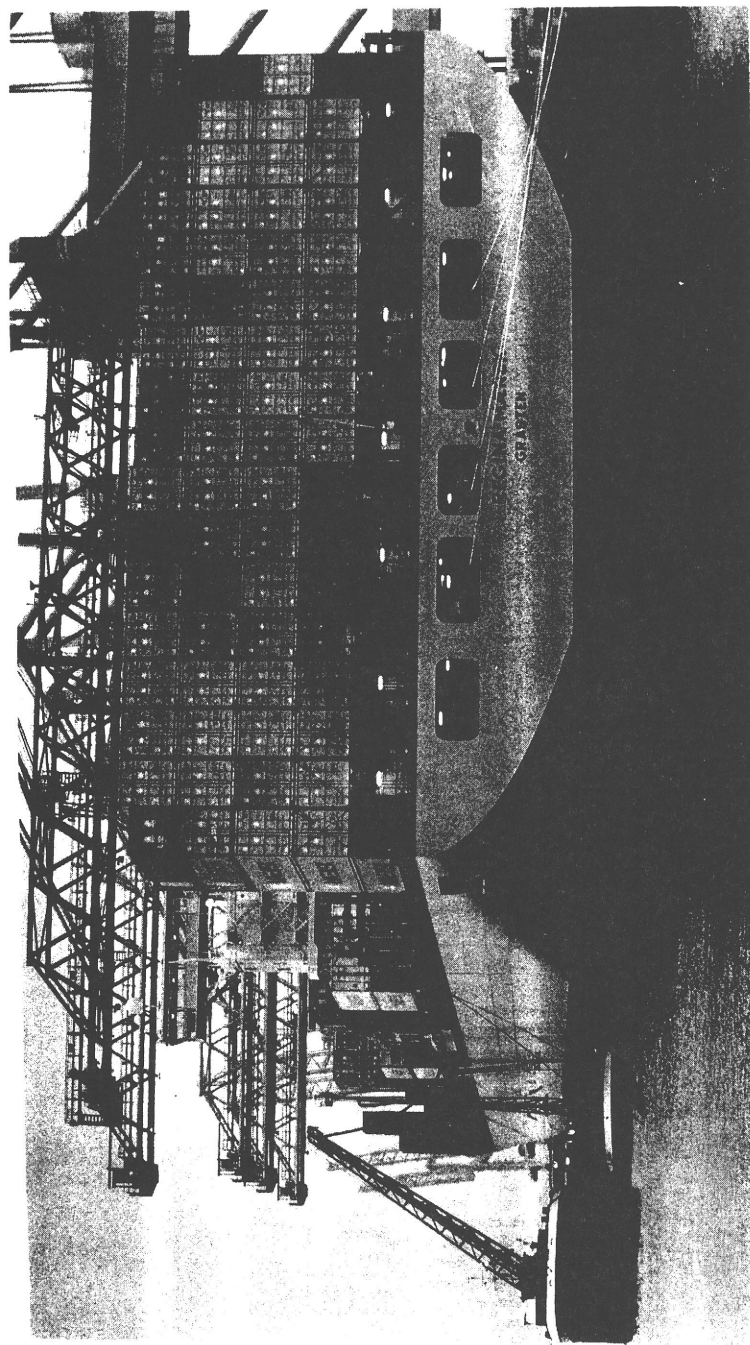
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**NOTES**

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The revenue officers nightmare; the largest container ship in the world on its maiden voyage arrives at Rotterdam-and it is Danish. It can carry 6000 containers and it went on to worry Southampton before leaving for the far East. No-one is actually waiting for it to come back.