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THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO THE AFGHANISTAN CRISIS

As a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent US embargo of grain sales to the USSR, the European Commission and also the foreign affairs ministers of the nine European Community nations undertook a thorough review of the EC's commodity trading with the Eastern Bloc.

The Ministers did so in response to a series of proposals put forward by the European Commission, which, on its own authority, has the responsibility for the management of trade in foodstuffs.

The Commission has taken several measures for immediate effect. First, it has ensured that the EC will not make up in its own food exports to the USSR - especially of grains - losses which have been caused by the US embargo.

(On this, recent exports of EC grain to the Soviet Union have been small, also some quantities have been sold to other Eastern European nations.)

Second, the European Commission has suspended food aid to Afghanistan. This amounted to 3,000 tons of grain and 300 tons of milk powder.

Furthermore, the Commission does not envisage any new subsidized sales of sugar to the USSR in the near future and the same applies to butter and butter oil, of which the Soviet Union has been a beneficiary in the past.

Regarding grain, the USSR will in future also be excluded from the EC export restitution system.

A second Commission decision concerns the reopening of the system through which exports under subsidy are possible to the Eastern European countries, though this excludes the USSR. It will come into effect within the next two weeks. Their participation in this scheme was suspended on 10th January.

Thereafter, the Community exporters will be able to request restitutions for this group of countries. The decisions of the Commission aim at ensuring respect for traditional export levels: Eastern Europe has bought varying quantities of wheat and barley during the past few years (spread over a period of 6 years: about 1.3 million tonnes of wheat and 3.5 million tonnes of barley).

The USSR will no longer be one of the destinations for which restitutions for export of wheat or barley can be requested. On wheat, this is consistent with the traditional export levels, because the USSR has not imported any wheat from the Community during the last six years.

However, there have been exports of barley from the Community to the Soviet Union, some 950,000 tonnes, during the same period.

These measures have since been politically endorsed by the EC Council of Ministers which also decided that the aid intended for Afghanistan should now be sent to Afghan refugees who have fled to Pakistan.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament meeting in Strasbourg last week devoted a full debate to the Afghanistan issue in which Members representing most parts of the political spectrum expressed their shock and indignation at the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

As a result of this debate, the following resolutions were passed, in which the Parliament:

- Condemns the armed intervention in Afghanistan which is contrary to the provisions of the UN Charter.
- Calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Afghanistan in order to enable its people to determine their own form of government.

- Emphasizes the responsibility of the USSR for the grave consequences of its action on the policy of detente and affirms that the principles of detente are neither divisible nor limited to certain geographical regions and confirms the urgent need to ensure that they are applied everywhere.
- Reaffirms its desire for detente and deplores the brutal intervention of the USSR which diminishes its future development.
- Requests the Commission to review immediately all economic, commercial, credit and financial relations between the USSR and the European Community, specifically in the field of high technology, agricultural products and anti-dumping practices and to report to the Council of Ministers.
- Calls upon the Council and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the nine acting in political cooperation to take effective measures in the light of the Commission's report in support of efforts to end the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.
- Welcomes the decision provisionally to suspend food aid to Afghanistan and calls on the Commission to give full support to the programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to supply food and medical aid to the Afghan refugees who have fled into neighbouring states.
- Urges member governments to act in cooperation with all governments who condemn this flagrant act of aggression against an independent sovereign state.
- Calls upon the International Olympics Committee, as well as national committees of member states and the Federations of National Athletic Associations taking part in the Olympic Games with the representatives of participating athletes to reconsider whether the summer games should take place in Moscow if the occupation of Afghanistan continues.
- Instructs its President to forward this Resolution to the UN Secretary General, to the Parliament and governments of the member states of the Community and to the Commission and Council with the request for the latter to report to the European Parliament.

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