



WE/35/91
10 October 1991

THE WEEK IN EUROPE

Soviet food aid package approved. The European Community has agreed to provide food aid to the Soviet Union worth 2bn ecus (£1.4bn) provided that other Group of Seven member countries made similar commitments. The EC's contribution agreed by Economic and Finance Ministers in Luxembourg on Monday includes some existing commitments, with £860m in new money. The EC is offering one third of the food aid requested by the USSR, with the other two thirds being equally shared between the USA on the one hand and Japan and Canada on the other. The G7 is to send a high level mission to the USSR with a view to setting up the practical workings of the whole operation. Meanwhile UK Prime Minister John Major, Chairman of G7, has said he will pursue his contacts with the other G7 partners with a view to reaching agreement on the total amount of the package and the allocation of country-by-country tasks. Commission President Jacques Delors said that, given the scale of the problems in the Soviet Union, any food effort had to be international with clear burden sharing. The EC will try to work with the newly formed inter-republic committee on the economy, Delors said. To ensure that the Soviet aid effort is not undermined by EC budgetary limits, the EC is expected to raise the money on international markets and then pass it on to Moscow in the form of credits. The EC will also use the funds to promote so-called triangular arrangements, with the Soviet Union required to spend half the money on products from its former partners in Eastern Europe.

Christophersen in Moscow. Commission Vice-President Henning Christophersen had a 75 minute meeting with President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union during a two-day visit to Moscow last week. The talks focused on three issues: food aid, constitutional questions and macroeconomic problems.

Delors defends de Havilland decision. Commission President Jacques Delors has firmly defended the Commission's recent decision to block the proposed acquisition by Aerospatiale and Alenia of the Canadian aircraft manufacturer de Havilland against criticism by French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas. In a statement made at the informal meeting of EC Foreign Ministers in the Netherlands at the weekend, Delors justified the decision on legal and competition grounds, adding that the French had got emotional about the ban, instead of using logic. Commission Vice-President Sir Leon Brittan, speaking to the European Parliament, yesterday (Wednesday) also defended the decision saying no responsible competition Commissioner would have taken a different view. He added that the proposal was not the result of "anti-French prejudices" in DG IV (Competition Directorate). Rather it was assembled from information gathered from the parties, their competitors, their customers and experts.

Declaration on Yugoslavia. After their informal meeting at Haarzuilen in the Netherlands over the weekend, EC Foreign Ministers warned the Yugoslav warring factions that they were preparing to enforce economic sanctions against them unless the various agreed ceasefires were honoured. The Ministers invited the UN Secretary-General to speed up his report in accordance with Security Council Resolution 713 and to send a special envoy to Yugoslavia "without delay".

Duty-free shopping. UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont asked EC Finance Ministers on Monday to extend duty-free shopping for up to 15 years after 1992. EC Tax Commissioner Christiane Scrivener said the notion of duty free was totally incompatible with the single market. She added the Commission would consider maintaining duty-free shopping for a transition period beyond 1993 if Ministers agreed on a reasonable timeframe. Some Member States have suggested a four year extension might be acceptable.

Television Without Frontiers Directive. The "Television without Frontiers" Directive came into force on 3 October bringing into being a global audiovisual strategy for the EC. One of the Directive's main features is to bring in the free circulation of TV programmes throughout the Community. Another is to promote "European" programmes, notably from independent producers. The measure which caught the headlines is the ban on TV tobacco advertising throughout the Community.

Anglo-Italian initiative. The UK and Italy proposed on Friday to strengthen the Western European Union (WEU) to serve as a European defence arm with its own rapid reaction forces, but in close coordination with NATO. British officials said the initiative, developed in recent months by Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and Italian Foreign Minister Gianni de Michelis, was intended as a compromise to bridge EC differences over a common defence and foreign policy. France and Germany have attracted criticism from the Dutch EC Presidency for inviting interested Ministers to a special conference on security in Paris tomorrow (Friday).

Human Rights, Racism, Xenophobia. Social Affairs Commissioner Vasso Papandreou announced in Strasbourg yesterday (Wednesday) that the Commission had decided to ask the Council to allow the European Community as such to adhere to the European Convention on Human Rights. The EC would thus be placed on equal status with the individual Member States, all of whom are members of the Convention. She also told the European Parliament that the Commission was promoting a thorough study of the legal instruments available to Member States to combat racism and xenophobia.

Transit agreement in sight. The EC and Austria and Switzerland on Monday moved closer to settling their dispute over transit rights through the Alps. After a meeting of EC Transport Ministers, Dutch Transport Minister Hanja Maij-Weggen said that an accord was now in sight and scheduled a special meeting of Transport Ministers in Luxembourg on 21 October to finalise it.

Titanium Dioxide proposal. The Commission has just approved a proposal for a Directive on reducing and finally eliminating the pollution produced by waste from the titanium dioxide industry. The initiative follows a European Court of Justice decision on 11 June 1991 annulling a previous Directive passed in 1989.

Haiti. Following the coup d'etat in Haiti, Commission Vice-President Manuel Marin announced last week that aid to that country had been suspended.

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EDIT. European Databases Information & Training, will be running training courses in the use of EC databases in various cities in the UK. For dates, costs etc telephone Antony Inglis or Keith Goodall at EDIT on 0203 838730.

European Municipal Directory. Just out, this volume contains details of all local authorities - over 10,000 of them - in the EC, and outlines how local government works in all twelve States. Foreword by Commissioner Bruce Millan - 1,250 pages. Price £98 incl. p&p from European Directories Ltd, 531-533 Kings Road, London SW10 0TZ. Tel: 071 351 3612. Fax: 071 352 4883. ISBN 0 95 17520 0 6.

Conference and Diary Dates

First Annual Conference of the Food Law Group. "Global Trends in Food Law" at the Cafe Royal, London W1 on 15 October. Opening address by Rt Hon John Gummer MP, Minister for Agriculture. Details from Miss S Lees on Tel: 081 944 1335.

The Law Society of England and Wales National Conference. Palais des Congres, Brussels on 16-20 October. Theme: "Widening Horizons". Details from Law Society's Conference office. Tel: 071 320 5814. Fax: 071 404 1124.

Initiative Eastern Europe: Romania. CBI organised conference on 22 October at CBI HQ, Centre Point, London WC1. Details from Sandra Aldred, CBI Conferences on 071 379 7400.

Setting up Links with Eastern and Central Europe. 31 October - a one day conference on the EC and national funding available for joint ventures in Eastern Europe. Details from Institute of European Trade and Technology on 071 606 2930.

Informal Tourism Ministers	17-18 October	Noordwijk
Agriculture Council	21-22 October	Luxembourg
EC/EFTA meeting	21 October	Luxembourg
European Parliament Session	21-25 October	Strasbourg
Research Council	28 October	Luxembourg
Fisheries Council	28 October	Luxembourg
Energy Council	29 October	Luxembourg

Our next briefing will be on Thursday, 17 October at 11.30am.

NB: The Week in Europe does not necessarily reflect the official views of the European Commission.