

.... December 20 Décembre 1990

.... LE TEMPS - Région parisienne: Journée
encore très nuageuse. Ce soir il
pleuvra. Il fera 2'.

.... SG/PRB/D(90)214

AFP: LE MONDE EN BREF

PARIS - Le Président François Mitterrand a mis en garde mercredi les dirigeants irakiens sur "les risques qu'ils encourent" en cas de conflit dans le Golfe, tout en laissant entendre que la France pourrait prendre une initiative de paix avant l'échéance du 15 janvier.

MOSCOU - Le Président Mikhaïl Gorbatchev, appelé à faire preuve de la plus grande fermeté par des officiers supérieurs de l'armée, a brandi mercredi la menace de recourir à l'état d'urgence ou à l'administration présidentielle dans les régions les plus troublées de l'Union Soviétique.

TIRANA - Six personnes ayant participé aux manifestations qui avaient dégénéré en émeutes la semaine dernière à Elbasan, dans le centre de l'Albanie, ont été condamnées mardi à des peines allant de 5 à 10 ans de prison.

RABAT - Une longue série de procès s'est ouverte mercredi à Fés, Rabat et Tanger, contre des centaines de personnes arrêtées au cours des émeutes du 14 décembre.

WORLD EVENTS

FINANCIAL TIMES: Gorbachev threatens direct rule

MOSCOW - "President Mikhail Gorbachev yesterday promised to impose direct presidential rule on conflict zones in the Soviet Union if national security or people's lives were at stake... His speech coincided with an admission by Mr Nikolai Ryzhkov, the prime minister, that perestroika as it was conceived had failed. Both men were speaking at the fourth Congress of People's Deputies, summoned to seek solutions to the economic recession, the confrontation between central government and the republics, and the collapse of law and order... Mr Gorbachev rejected accusations by Mr Boris Yeltsin, leader of the Russian republic and his arch political rival, about a new era of Kremlin dictatorship. Mr Yeltsin accused Mr Gorbachev of accumulating more legal powers than any Soviet leader since the Revolution, including both Stalin and Brezhnev... Mr Gorbachev said there was no such thing as the dictatorship of the Kremlin any more: the Kremlin belonged to everyone. 'All political speculation on this score is populism with rotten roots', he said in a phrase directed at his extremely popular rival."

THE INDEPENDENT: Famine back to Ethiopia

MASSAWA (Eritrea) - "The worst drought in living memory has hit northern Ethiopia and has started to claim lives. Not even the 1984-85 famine brought such devastation. Already malnutrition and undernutrition are prevalent and next year's harvest is not due until September or October. From Red Sea Province in Sudan to the Eritrean lowlands, country animals are dying in their hundreds. By Christmas it will be thousands and by February there will be none left alive. The reason is clear: there is no grass at all and almost no water."

OECD IN THE NEWS

Japan

ASAHI EVENING NEWS: Japan's land policy attacked

TOKYO - "The OECD has criticized Japan's land policy, claiming spiraling land prices are discouraging the entry of foreign firms into the Japanese market and slowing down the reduction of current-account surplus. In a report assessing the general condition of Japan's economy, the OECD says that the spectacular rise in land prices since 1987 'has aggravated

differences in wealth distribution and fueled credit expansion'. Although the fundamental cause is the 'relative scarcity of urban land in Japan', the report says that 'This scarcity is unnecessarily aggravated by some aspects of existing zoning rules, construction codes, and the tax system'... The 70-page report also singles out the Japanese agriculture sector as a target for criticism. It says Japan's implicit subsidies to agriculture are among the highest among OECD members and close to twice the OECD average... Concerning Japan's trade policies, the report says that, despite a rapid decline in current-account surplus, frictions with trade partners have persisted."

LE JOURNAL DE GENEVE: Ralentissement et vieillissement

GENEVE - "L'OCDE prévoit une croissance du PNB japonais réel de 6,3% en 1990 et de 4,1% en 1991 dans sa dernière étude économique consacrée à ce pays. Le taux d'inflation s'accroîtra probablement en 1990-91 par rapport à 1989 pour atteindre 2 1/2 à 2 3/4% environ en rythme annuel (mesurée par l'indice des prix de la consommation privée), essentiellement en raison des tensions sur le marché du travail. L'excédent extérieur devrait cesser de diminuer en volume en 1990 et pourrait s'accroître en 1991.... A l'occasion de cette étude, l'OCDE s'est notamment penchée sur le vieillissement de la population du Japon en considérant qu'il deviendra l'un des problèmes majeurs auquel devra faire face le pays du Soleil levant... Pour pallier en partie la diminution de l'offre de main-d'oeuvre liée au vieillissement de la population, l'OCDE estime qu'il serait possible de mieux utiliser les ressources humaines. En particulier, les personnes âgées et les femmes qui n'ont joué jusqu'ici qu'un rôle 'périphérique' dans l'emploi au Japon. L'ouverture du marché du travail japonais aux étrangers constituerait également une solution."

Belgium/Luxembourg

FINANCIAL TIMES: Labour shortage worrying

BRUSSELS - "... The OECD warns, in its latest review of the Belgian economy, of serious constraints to growth caused by a looming labour shortage because of an ageing workforce and expensive and antiquated labour market policies... Growth continued to be strong last year at 4% (against 4.5% in 1988), with capacity utilisation at record levels and private capital expenditures increasing more in the past 2 years than in the preceding decade. Belgians consequently enjoyed the biggest increase in their disposable income since 1976, which fed into higher savings... The report carefully underlines that Belgium's ability to grow itself out of its public finance predicament will depend ultimately on changes in labour policy, to confront 'one of the least favourable demographic outlooks of any OECD member country'. The OECD calls for a serious re-evaluation of Belgium's generous early-retirement provisions, measures to enhance labour mobility and increase retraining, and more incentives for women and the elderly to stay at work."

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Faster growth for Duchy

PARIS - "Luxembourg's economic growth rate next year is expected to pick up after a sharp slowdown this year, according to the OECD. The Paris-based agency said it expects the grand duchy's gross domestic product to grow 2.8% in 1991, compared with 2.6% this year, but still well below the 6.1% recorded in 1989. Growth in the value of output of goods and services minus income from abroad was projected at 3.1% in 1992."

Espagne

EL PAIS: Plus de cohésion sociale

PARIS - Dans son rapport sur l'économie espagnole, l'OCDE préconise un plus grand degré de consensus et de cohésion sociale, faute de quoi l'expansion économique remarquable des années 80 ne pourrait pas être poursuivie. Pour 1991 et 1992, l'OCDE prévoit une croissance du PIB espagnol de 2,7% et 3% respectivement. la formation brute de capital fixe, qui a progressé de 8,6% cette année, devrait ralentir à 4,3% l'an prochain."

MONETARY PROBLEMS

FINANCIAL TIMES: US cuts rates, Germany won't

WASHINGTON, FRANKFURT - "Interest rates in the main industrial countries were yesterday poised to diverge in the wake of a cut in the US discount

rate on Tuesday, after the Bundesbank warned that it might have to lift German rates. Britain's monetary authorities made clear that there would be no cut while the pound was weak. This was in spite of increasingly clear signs that Britain is in a deepening recession. In Tokyo, Mr Yasushi Mieno, the governor of the Bank of Japan, also dashed hopes of an early cut in Japanese interest rates."

EEC

FINANCIAL TIMES: Solvay, ICI fined

BRUSSELS - "ICI of the UK and Solvay of Belgium, were yesterday fined a total of Ecu47m (\$64.4m) for cartel activities in the European market in soda ash. The anti-trust fines, the largest ever imposed by the European Commission, were announced after the companies were found guilty of a 'serious breach' of competition rules in the soda ash market, which is worth Ecu1bn annually... The Commission said the 3 companies had been running one of the longest-standing cartels in the European Community and had divided the market so that they were not in competition with each other."

.....

END-OF-TEXT