

.... March 25 Mars 1992

.... LE TEMPS - Région parisienne: légère
amélioration mais nuages menaçants.
Vent du Nord modéré. Il fera 8 .

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AFP: LE MONDE EN BREF

HELSINKI - La CSCE s'est élargie mardi à 51 membres en admettant trois nouveaux Etats - Géorgie, Slovénie, Croatie - et a réussi à trouver un accord sur la tenue d'une conférence de paix internationale au Nagorny-Karabakh qui se tiendra, sous ses auspices, à Minsk (Belarus) à une date non précisée.

ANKARA - La chasse aux rebelles kurdes menée par les forces turques s'est poursuivie mardi dans le sud-est anatolien, notamment à Sirnak où un avion a mitraillé un quartier, tandis que des chars encerclaient la ville.

SEOUL - Le Parti libéral-démocrate (PLD), au pouvoir en Corée du sud, n'obtiendrait qu'une majorité relative aux élections législatives en enlevant 108 des 237 sièges à pourvoir, après le décompte de 95 pour cent des bulletins. Le Parti démocratique de M. Kim Dae-Jung (opposition) enlève au moins 73 circonscriptions, le Parti d'Unification Nationale (PNU, conservateur) 22 et les candidats indépendants 19 sièges.

NUCLEAR LEAK NEAR SAINT PETERSBURG

REUTER: Russia tries to calm fears over reactor leak

MOSCOW - Russia hurried to reassure an anxious world that a radioactive leak at a nuclear power station caused little damage, but Western countries called for unsafe former Soviet reactors to be swiftly closed down. Radioactive iodine and inert gases escaped early on Tuesday from the plant at Sosnovy Bor, 100 km (60 miles) west of St Petersburg on the Gulf of Finland, after an unexplained loss of pressure in a reactor channel. 'Emission forecasts are favourable, except for iodine, the level of which is expected to exceed the norm by four times', the Atomic Energy Ministry said in a statement carried by Itar-Tass news agency. 'Measures are being taken to reduce iodine levels'. The incident registered three points on the seven-point accident scale used by the International Atomic Energy Agency and reawakened fears that the world's worst nuclear disaster at the Chernobyl plant in Belarus could be repeated. A 1986 explosion at Chernobyl killed 31 people immediately and spewed nuclear particles across much of Europe. The Sosnovy Bor reactor was one of 16 in the former Soviet Union built to the same design as the station at Chernobyl.

PAYS DE L'EST

Russie

LE FIGARO: L'heure de vérité pour les réformes

MOSCOU - "... Conformément à un décret de Boris Eltsine qui établissait les principes sans prescrire le calendrier, les autorités de la capitale ont libéré une nouvelle série de prix jusqu'alors contrôlés: ceux du sucre, du sel, des allumettes, du fromage blanc, du lait en poudre et condensé ainsi que de deux sortes de pains."

REUTER: Yeltsine says Russia will delay free energy prices

MOSCOW - Russia will put off freeing energy prices until the end of May or early June, Russian President Boris Yeltsine said on Tuesday. Itar-Tass news agency quoted Yeltsine as telling leading Russian politicians at a Kremlin meeting that his country would still have to go through the 'painful experience' of freeing energy prices... Belarus Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kebich said earlier the 11 leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States had agreed at a summit in Kiev last week to put off the Russian plan until after the spring sowing season. Price liberalisation in Russia would put pressure on other Commonwealth countries to follow suit. Officials expect energy prices to rise eight or 10 times above present subsidised levels after liberalisation.

Bulgaria

FINANCIAL TIMES: Bulgaria unveils austerity budget

SOFIA - "Bulgaria unveiled a tough austerity budget yesterday, saying it was tailored to please the World Bank and IMF. The draft budget, which provoked heated debates in parliament, proposes a deficit of 9.2bn leva (£226.5m) or 4.3 per cent of gross domestic product GDP... Bulgaria, whose economy contracted by around 20 to 25 per cent last year, and which is saddled with a \$11.5bn foreign debt, needs the approval of the IMF to attract foreign investment and reach agreements with its bank creditors... The new budget, the first by a non-communist government for four decades, slashes capital and social security spending."

GATT

FINANCIAL TIMES: Austria's EC entry carries trade risks

"Austria's prospective membership of the EC will result in more open markets for other Community countries but risks increasing still further its reliance on preferential trade arrangements, a GATT report warned yesterday. The report notes that about 75 per cent of Austrian imports originate in preferential sources, mainly members of the EC or the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), to which Austria belongs."

FINANCIAL TIMES: Taiwan, China could join GATT

"China and Taiwan could both be members of GATT a year from now, following an informal deal between China, the US and EC over Taiwan's application to join the 103-member world trade body. Officials said yesterday the next meeting of GATT's governing council, on April 30, was likely to set up a working party to consider Taipei's membership bid."

CHINA

REUTER: Top economist calls for radical reform

BEIJING - China should float its currency and not be afraid to tap capitalist systems for ways to boost its socialist economy, the cabinet's senior economist said in the clearest explanation so far of Beijing's new reform push. The economy must be internationalised and 'leftist' thinking stopped, Ma Hong, State Council research director, was quoted by the official press on Thursday as saying. Reforms that focus only on attracting foreign investment in the manufacturing sector do not go far enough, he said, calling for bold opening of the service sector... Ma, who is in charge of plotting the cabinet's economic policy, criticised leaders who were afraid to use capitalist methods to achieve China's goals. 'There are still people who equate reform and opening up with the introduction of capitalism'. 'To put economic questions in overly ideological terms has caused great losses for socialism', he said.

OECD ECONOMIES

Switzerland

REUTER: Government, central bank back IMF membership

BERNE - Three Swiss government ministers and the central bank governor on Tuesday launched a campaign to persuade their countrymen to vote in favour of joining the IMF and World Bank. Calling for support in a May 17 referendum, President and Foreign Minister Rene Felber said it was in Switzerland's interest to have a louder voice on aid policy and international monetary affairs at the two Washington-based agencies... Felber said Switzerland's current observer status at the fund and bank was proving more and more inadequate and would become increasingly meaningless. Finance Minister Otto Stich, Economics Minister Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, and Swiss National Bank (SNB) President Markus Lusser also appealed for voters to approve IMF and World Bank membership.

France

HERALD TRIBUNE: Berlusconi drops plan to bail out La Cinq

PARIS - "The Italian businessman Silvio Berlusconi abandoned Tuesday a rescue bid for La Cinq, the troubled French television station, accusing French authorities of sabotaging his efforts. Mr. Berlusconi's withdrawal

means the station, launched in 1985 as France's first experiment in private television, is likely to face liquidation, said a staff representative, Frederic Dezert. He said the court-appointed administrator, Hubert Lafont, told a staff meeting on Tuesday that the station had funds to run only until April 3. The French media concern Hachette SA, the channel's operator, which holds 25 percent, has refused to cover its losses. Mr. Berlusconi estimated La Cinq's liabilities at 3.6 billion francs (\$638 million)."

Italy

FINANCIAL TIMES: Italians opt for smaller cities

"Italy's population has scarcely grown over the past decade and is shifting from large city centres to smaller cities and large towns, according to preliminary results of the 10-yearly national census, released yesterday. The population grew by just 0.3 per cent to 56,411,290, against a 3.0 per cent increase the previous decade, confirming Italy's declining birthrate, one of the lowest in Europe. The census reflected the continued north/south divide, with smaller families and lower birth rates in the north... As for the exodus from big cities, Milan's population fell 16 per cent, while in 11 other cities the decrease was above 10 per cent."

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