

Business Briefs

Corporate Policy

BBC unveils plan to dominate newscasting

The British Broadcasting Corp. world radio service announced that a second English-language program will be set up, entirely devoted to newscasting, to be on the air 24 hours a day, the Spanish daily *El País* reported Jan. 4. The program is part of a broader expansion plan. British-controlled media already dominate outlets worldwide (see *EIR*, Jan. 17, "The Media Cartel That Controls What You Think").

New programs in Russian, Arabic, and Chinese are being considered, as well as services accessible via the Internet. The BBC also plans to launch a non-satellite, digital BBC radio service for all main European cities, which will presumably be as accessible as local FM is now. The BBC's transmissions within the British Isles will be sold to a consortium led by Castle Tower, which includes France Telecom, for £210 million; the proceeds will be used by BBC to finance its digital technologies. The British Foreign Office is now reviewing these plans.

Sam Younger, BBC's director, told *El País*, "The strategy we are putting to the government aims at giving the BBC the means to reinforce its position as the world's main broadcaster in the 21st century."

Labor

Globalization provokes strikes throughout Asia

People throughout Asia, not just in South Korea, have taken up the fight to defend their not-so-high living standards and labor regulations against globalization, the German economic daily *Handelsblatt* said in a Jan. 15 editorial. In the absence of trade unions, this has meant "a dramatic increase of wild-cat strikes" in recent months.

In the Philippines, workers struck successfully against "one of the richest persons in Asia," Lucio Tan, owner of Philippine Airlines. "In Malaysia, construction workers

from India and Bangladesh fought for better working contracts. In Thailand, workers closed down the production at the Suzuki motor-bike factory for three months. In Cambodia, enraged workers forced the government to accept by law the freedom to demonstrate." Similarly, students are protesting in Myanmar. And in Indonesia, textile and assembly-line workers went on strike to defend their minimum wages of about \$2.50 per day.

The reason for the strikes is obvious, *Handelsblatt* said. In the name of worldwide competition on investments, efforts are being pursued to lower the already low labor regulations and wage standards. For example, the government of Bangladesh recently produced an advertisement promising foreign investors zones with a guarantee of no strikes, no trade unions, and low wages. Also, Malaysian authorities are giving guarantees to foreign investors, that if they buy up a company, no strikes and no trade union members would be tolerated.

Finance

Britannia on 'most ambitious' program

The British royal yacht *Britannia*, carrying "Invisibles," i.e., those who offer British financial services, was scheduled to embark on Jan. 20 on its "most ambitious commercial program" ever, visiting Pakistan, India, Thailand, Malaysia, and possibly other nations, the Jan. 14 *London Times* reported. The *Britannia* will visit the subcontinent in March, sailing first to Karachi, Pakistan, and then to Bombay and Madras, India. In Bombay, at a minimum, the "Invisibles" will hold a seminar on March 11. It was such a crew which plotted the destabilization of Italy on the yacht in June 1992.

The Lord Mayor of London, who represents the Corporation of London, the local authority for the "Square Mile," London's City financial district, and Prince Edward, will be with the *Britannia* in India; both will also visit New Delhi. In September 1996, the Lord Mayor and a delegation of City businessmen paid a 12-day visit to China, to

"promote the City of London as the world's largest financial center."

The *Britannia* will sail with "Ocean Wave 97," the biggest deployment of Royal Navy ships since the Persian Gulf War, which will spend the next seven and a half months in the Asia-Pacific region. Rear Admiral Alan West said that the ambitious deployment is to support investment in the area and show military might in a region where you "only need look at Korea to see there is instability," the *Times* reported.

Armed Forces Minister Nicholas Soames said: "Britain has huge interests in the Asia-Pacific region—commercial, political, and strategic. . . . It will show Britain's determination to remain a player on the world stage."

Agriculture

Keep up production levels, says professor

Germany and other industrial nations must not renounce high-yield agricultural policies, set aside fertile areas, or favor ecological farming with its low yields, Prof. Wolfgang Haber, of Munich's Technical University, told the winter meeting of the German Agricultural Association on Jan. 15 in Wiesbaden, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported. These countries have a responsibility to feed a growing world population, and therefore have an obligation not to give up overproduction, at least not of grain. "The general, most important ecological obligation agriculture has, is to supply mankind with food," Haber said. Intensive, high-yield agriculture is mandatory, as long as the world's population is growing.

In developing countries, as well, it is neither right nor responsible to introduce low-yield techniques and not to use fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals, and genetic engineering. Industrial countries have to grant food aid to the regions in need. "The precondition for this is to have enough grain in stock. In this respect, overproduction that was complained about in the past, looks completely different and is an obligation," Haber stressed.

Christian Bonte Friedheim of the International Service for National Agricultural Research in The Hague, said that agriculture must prepare for the year 2060, when almost twice as many people will live on earth. Agriculture, "without doubt, has a positive future," he said.

Nuclear Energy

Russian scientist backs use of floating plants

Boris Papkovsky, doctor of technical sciences, called for the use of floating nuclear power plants in Russia's Arctic, in the newspaper *Trud* on Jan. 9. He said the efficiency of such plants made them useful around the world, including for desalination in the Middle East.

Citing the high cost of energy in Russia's outlying regions, Papkovsky wrote, "A realistic way to resolve the problem is to build floating nuclear electric power stations based on the power units that are used on Russian nuclear icebreakers. A two-reactor icebreaker-type power unit can, with a single nuclear-fuel load . . . operate over three years, 7,000 hours a year, at an average capacity of at least 50 megawatts." The plant can also transmit heat onto dry land, he said.

"The reliability of icebreaker reactor installations is guaranteed by the fact that they have been designed and manufactured by the same enterprises and plants that manufactured electric power installations for submarines and naval surface ships. Here the most progressive mechanical engineering and shipbuilding technologies have been used. That is why the creation of floating nuclear power stations based on icebreaker reactor installations can logically be regarded as conversion measures."

Nuclear electric power stations are "25-30% more advantageous than other alternative sources of energy operating on imported organic fuel (boiler stations using coal and diesel or gas-turbine installations using fuel oil). . . . The initial capital investments in the creation of a floating nuclear power station can be fully recovered within about 10 years."

The "Aysberg" Central Design Shipbuilding Bureau in St. Petersburg, and the Ministry of Atomic Energy Experimental Mechanical Engineering Design Bureau in Nizhny Novgorod, are working on the project. It is planned to build power units at the Baltiyskiy shipbuilding plant. A turbogenerator installation and automation systems are also being designed at the Kaluga Turbine Plant and at the St. Petersburg Avrova Science and Production Association, respectively. Papkovsky says that a prototype could be ready by 2000, "given normal financing," for \$254 million.

Australia

Raw materials exports called the priority

"Australia should focus more on improving its exports of raw materials rather than developing processing industries," Australia's Federal Minister for Primary Industries, John Anderson, was quoted saying by the Jan. 11-12 *Weekend Australian*. Anderson reportedly made this statement based on unpublished research by the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics, which purports to show that primary industries "stand to benefit far more than the processing sector from Asian trade liberalization over the next two decades." The policy is the same as that which Britain historically imposed on its colonies, to keep them in technological backwardness.

Anderson's plan is to reduce Australian industry to a supplier of unprocessed raw materials for Asian economies which are shifting into manufacturing and value-adding industries. This involves a full commitment to free trade, of which he and his National Party leader, Tim Fischer, are zealous advocates; they are presently trying to convince Australian producers to give up quarantine "trade barriers" that cannot be "justified," in the name of trade liberalization. "I will be spending a lot of time in 1997 explaining to rural and regional Australia the overall benefits of trade liberalization," Anderson said. At the same time, he admitted to being "very concerned" about the poor outlook for world commodity prices in 1997.

Briefly

IRELAND'S two largest transportation unions called for a national day of protest against cuts in operating costs, and cuts in wages of up to \$300 per week, the Jan. 16 *Irish Times* reported. Peter Cassells, general secretary of Ireland's Irish Congress of Trade Unions, warned the government that it "must not confuse private need with private greed."

TURKISH Ambassador to Iran Osman Koroturk said that the "Developing 8" group of nations is "open for broader cooperation," in an interview with the Jan. 7 *Iran News*. "Entry . . . is not restricted, and its door is open even for the non-Islamic countries," he said.

TWO MILLION children in the United Kingdom are malnourished, which is fueling the return of rickets, anemia, and tuberculosis, the Jan. 12 *Observer* reported. "The Hunger Within," a report by the School Milk Campaign, blamed the government, because it has cut cheap school meals and milk, the only source of nutritious food for many poor children.

IRANIAN Ambassador to Kazakhstan Hassan Qashqavi said that the Silk Route railroad has had a great impact on the economic development of the region, in a Jan. 12 statement in Almaty, Kazakhstan, *Ettela'at* reported. Trade volume between Iran and Kazakhstan is up by \$30 million, to \$100 million this year.

CHINA plans to increase residential housing space by 50% over the next four years, at a cost of about \$300 billion, the Jan. 3 *Asia Times* reported. At the same time, reforms in company-owned housing are expected to result in an fivefold increase in annual urban residential rental income.

THE LONDON futures market has grown 45% per annum since 1982, London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange Chairman Jack Wigglesworth announced on Jan. 15, the Italian daily *Il Sole 24 Ore* reported.