Does the Commission know, and can the Commission confirm, that 1.5 million Christians were killed in Turkey in mid-1915, including a large number of Syrian Orthodox Christians?

Is the Commission aware that in the past thirty years almost all of the Syrian Orthodox community have fled or emigrated from Turkey, and are now scattered abroad, above all in Europe and the US?

Is the Commission aware that there are more than 10,000 Syrian Orthodox Christians from Turkey living in the Netherlands, and that these naturalised citizens are extremely concerned about the repression of the small group of Syrian Orthodox citizens still living in Turkey?

What are the consequences of the way in which the Turkish Government deals with small Christian minorities against the background of Turkey's being an applicant for accession to the European Union?

Answer given by Mr Verheugen on behalf of the Commission

(3 April 2001)

The case of Father Abkulut to which the Honourable Member refers is under consideration in the Diyarbakir State Security Court. A third hearing will take place on 5 April 2001. No verdict has yet been given in this case.

The Commission, together with the Union Presidency and other members of the international community, is monitoring closely developments in this case, and will continue to do so. Such public concern has had positive effects, in that Father Abkulut has not been subjected to preventive detention during the legal proceedings.

The Commission is aware of the situation of the Syrian Orthodox Christians and other Christian communities in Turkey. It has addressed this issue in the Regular Report 2000 (1) on Turkey's progress towards accession. It is also taken up in the Accession Partnership with Turkey. In this document the Commission asks Turkey to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This would be a significant step forward since Article 27 of this Covenant affirms the need to respect cultural, religious and linguistic rights.

The Commission considers that the historical events, to which the Honourable Member refers, should be the subject of independent research, based on full access to relevant sources.


(2001/C 235 E/253)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0499/01

by Markus Ferber (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(22 February 2001)

Subject: Cooperation between the European Commission and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (CPBM)

Unlike all other Communist parties in Eastern Europe, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia not only kept its name but is said not to have changed its policies nor to have distanced itself from its past as the party of the Dictatorship. For this reason, the Czech President, the Czech Government, the democratic opposition in Prague and the diplomatic corps avoid all formal contact with the CPBM.

Is it true that the Commission has forged contacts with the CPBM and that representatives of its delegation attended the Party Conference in May 2000 and visited Party headquarters in December 2000? These meetings, which were brought to light by the press, have given rise to significant political displeasure in the Czech Republic. According to press reports, the Deputy Head of the Delegation, Counsellor Dreyer, noted that there was much 'common ground'.
Did the events in Prague take place with the agreement of the Commissioner and the Directorate-General? If so, who instructed the Delegation in Prague? Are any Commissioners to participate in similar meetings in the future? If not, what has the Commission done to call its delegation to order? What measures does the Commission intend to take to neutralise the false impression given to the Czech public of a legitimisation of the Communist Party?

With what other extreme parties does the Commission maintain contacts?

Are the results of the audit of the Prague Delegation already available? Have any funds been misused or disappeared?

Answer given by Mr Verheugen on behalf of the Commission

(4 May 2001)

The Commission and its Delegation in Prague maintain contacts with all parties represented in the Czech Parliament as far as these contacts are useful, in particular to ensure the widest possible consensus on issues related to accession to the European Union.

The Commission can confirm that in this context its Delegation – together with a number of Embassies from Member States – accepted an invitation to attend the party congress of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) in the spring of 2000. This type of activity is part of the ongoing process of maintain contacts with the parties represented in the Czech Parliament and is not the subject of individual instructions from the Commissioner or the Directorate General.

As to the second question, internal audits carried out by the Commission are confidential. In this respect, the Commission cannot provide the requested information on the audit concerning the Delegation in Prague to the Honourable Member. However, in the framework of the 1999 Discharge procedure and following the request of the Chairman of the Committee on Budget and Control, an executive summary of the results of this internal audit report was forwarded to the Chairman as well as to the Rapporteur for the 1999 Discharge, on a confidential basis, according to the rules of the Framework Agreement (Annex III) between the Parliament and the Commission.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0502/01

by Chris Davies (ELDR) to the Commission

(22 February 2001)

Subject: BSE, Trichlorphon and Crufomate

Is the Commission aware of any research being carried out into the cause of BSE which considers the possible effects of trichlorphon or crufomate systemic insecticides used as treatment against warble fly infection and described as causing in overdose ‘distressed breathing and a staggering gait’ (Black’s Veterinary Dictionary)?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(30 March 2001)

The Commission’s Scientific Steering Committee (SSC), which prepares the opinions related to transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, adopted on 26 June 1998 an opinion on possible links between bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and organophosphates used as pesticides against ecto- and endoparasites in cattle. The opinion concludes that there is no evidence for the existence of such a link. This opinion is, like all other scientific opinions, available on the following Internet address: http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/lis/sc/ssc/index_en.html.

The SSC has the mandate to permanently monitor new developments in the field of BSE that may affect health and consumer protection. Any new data that would become available, including possible new research or evidence on the insecticides the Honourable Member refers to, will be evaluated by the SSC.