WRITTEN QUESTION E-1891/01
by Ioannis Marínos (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(27 June 2001)

Subject: Persecution of the Greek minority in Albania and activities of Albanian extremists in Greece

According to a report by the Athens News Agency from Gjirokastra, the former Prime Minister of Albania, Mr Fatos Nano, formally condemned the leader of the official opposition, Mr Sali Berisha, on 29 May 2001 for the harsh policies he had pursued as President of Albania against the Greek minority living in the south of the country. Mr Nano described how he used to share cigarettes in the prison cells with Greek Albanians imprisoned by Mr Berisha. He also estimated that USD 1 billion in currency was flowing into the country from the hundreds of thousands of Albanians working in Greece.

The weekly magazine, Zoom, published in FYROM reported on 25 May 2001 that a major offensive was about to be launched by Albanian extremists in Greece, who have already formed a force called the 'Tsamouria Liberation Army'. Citing secret service sources, the magazine reports that a complete plan of operations was drawn up early in the year in Switzerland (where most of the leaders of the Albanian extremist organisations live), the objective being the annexation of Greek territory to a 'Greater Albania'.

What is the Commission's response to the information that terrorist operations may be launched on the territory of a Member State of the Union? What information does the Commission have concerning the persecution of the large Greek minority which even the former Prime Minister of Albania has condemned — which was also repressed for decades by Hoxha's totalitarian communist regime? Is the Commission considering linking EU economic aid to Albania with respect for the human rights of the Albanian people and the ethnic minorities living in that country?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission
(1 August 2001)

The Commission is not aware of any terrorist operations which might be launched by possible Albanian extremists in Greece.

Repression in Albania during the Hoxha era was, regretfully, quite widespread, and it certainly included representatives of the Greek minority. The situation has, however, evolved since 1991. Today, Albania is signatory of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and, in general, takes a constructive approach towards minority issues. It recognises the existence of an important Greek minority and is attempting to bring its legislation and practice up to international standards. During discussions in the framework of the Union/Albania High Level Steering Group in May 2001, the Albanian Government stressed its intention gradually to complete the legal framework for minority protection and to abolish the concept of 'minority zones'. These steps will contribute to enhancing minority protection in Albania.

Community assistance to Albania has been, and will continue to be, linked to the respect of essential political criteria such as human rights and protection of minorities. The Commission closely follows up developments in these sensitive areas.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1895/01
by Konstantinos Hatzidakis (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(28 June 2001)

Subject: Non-disbursement of appropriations under the second CSF for Greece

What is the amount of appropriations made available to Greece under the second CSF which have not yet been disbursed? Which specific programmes are concerned and what are the reasons for the delay?
Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(18 September 2001)

The Commission has paid all instalments to Greece for all operational programmes (OPs) of the 1994-1999 Community Support Framework, with the exception of the final instalments for 1999, for which the Greek authorities have not yet presented their payment requests.

These final payment requests must be presented to the Commission after the OPs closure by the Member States and must be submitted with the final execution reports for each OP. In the vast majority of cases, they are submitted after the deadline for payments to the final beneficiaries, which in this case is the end of 2001.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-1896/01

by Charles Tannock (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(28 June 2001)

Subject: Preservation of North Sea cod and haddock stocks

With reference to Commissioner Fischler’s answer to Written Question E-1138/01 (1), are the observers who are required to sample the percentage of each species caught by vessels fishing for sandeels employees of the Member States or the Commission, and are their findings sent to the Commission and made available as a matter of public record?

Could the Commission also indicate whether any independent bodies, including university marine biology departments, have issued findings which support the Commission’s view that there is little if any evidence that industrial sandeel fishing in the North Sea deprives species such as cod, haddock, whiting etc. of their food?


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Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(3 September 2001)

The observers referred to are employees of Member States.

Their findings will be sent to the Commission. At present, the Commission has no intention of publishing these findings. However, they will be made available to officials of Member States and will be discussed with Member States when formulating further details of the North Sea cod recovery plan.

To date, the Commission is unaware of any findings issued by university marine biology departments or any other scientific body on the effects on food supply to cod, whiting, haddock etc. of industrial fishing for sandeels or any other species. However, the Commission has part-funded a research project in which relationships between the abundance of sandeels and factors such as growth rate of cod were investigated in a geographical area off the east coast of Scotland. The results of this study have still to be worked up and published. This study has been continued on the initiative of British authorities. Results of the continued study are not yet available.