

(98/C 323/34)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0236/98**by José Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE) to the Commission***(13 February 1998)**Subject:* Helms-Burton Act

On Thursday 15 January 1998 the EU and the USA held a ministerial meeting in Washington.

One of the topics raised was undoubtedly the Helms-Burton Act relating to Cuba.

Could the Commission provide information regarding the progress which has been made in the negotiations since 15 October 1997?

Answer given by Sir Leon Brittan on behalf of the Commission*(13 March 1998)*

Under the terms of the April 1997 understanding between the Community and the United States on the Helms-Burton and D'Amato legislation, the Community and the United States are seeking to develop jointly agreed disciplines on investments in illegally expropriated property and principles governing the use of extraterritorial legislation.

Recent contacts between the Community and the United States, since the 15 January Community and United States ministerial, have been constructive. The Community continues to argue that positive progress must be recorded on all the various aspects of the Understanding, both on Helms-Burton and D'Amato, to ensure a full implementation thereof. We continue to press the United States for a rapid solution to all these issues which protects European interests and inhibits future United States recourse to illegal extraterritorial legislation.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-0266/98**by Yiannis Roubatis (PSE) to the Commission***(13 February 1998)**Subject:* The Tudjman regime's tactics in Croatia

According to a report in the International Herald Tribune, the Tudjman regime in Croatia is prosecuting the Croatian Helsinki Committee and the independent newspaper Feral Tribune, and it is seeking to impose controls on and abolish Croatian and foreign institutions which do not meet with its approval, subsidiaries of foreign undertakings, humanitarian and other non-governmental organisations which are struggling for the independence of the mass media, democracy and human rights in Croatia.

The reason given by the Tudjman regime for this prosecution is that all the organisations are introducing a dangerous new ideology into Croatia.

Will the Commission say:

1. Is it aware of these tactics by the Tudjman regime?
2. Does it intend to finance and to support by every means the institutions in Croatia which are being prosecuted?
3. Does it intend to call on the Croatian President to cease prosecuting bodies which are supporting the independence of the mass media, human rights and democracy in Croatia?

Answer given by Mr Van den Broek on behalf of the Commission*(13 March 1998)*

The Commission shares the Honourable Member's concern in relation to the freedom of association and expression in Croatia, in particular as regards recent laws and restrictions on the activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and independent media. It has voiced its concern at various levels and on multiple occasions in contacts with the Croatian authorities.

Respect for human rights is one of the conditions for the development of improved relations between Croatia and the Community. Indeed, freedom of expression and of association are specifically mentioned in the Council conclusions of 29 April 1997 which set out conditions for the development of bilateral relations with the countries covered by the Community's regional approach towards the countries of South Eastern Europe.