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LE MONDE EN BREF

BAGDAD - L'Irak est prêt à une "confrontation historique" entre les "forces du mal alignées aux côtés des Etats-Unis" et les "opprimés de la nation arabe et musulmane", a affirmé jeudi la presse irakienne au lendemain de l'échec de la rencontre irako-américaine de Genève.

WASHINGTON - Le Congrès des Etats-Unis a entamé jeudi un débat crucial sur le Golfe et les chefs de file des 2 partis prédisaient que le président George Bush obtiendrait ce qu'il souhaite: un feu vert pour l'utilisation de la force contre l'Irak si ce pays occupe toujours le Koweït le 15 janvier.

NEW YORK - Selon un sondage réalisé du 4 au 7 janvier pour ASSOCIATED PRESS, 44% des Américains pensent que les Etats-Unis doivent attaquer l'Irak et 50% qu'il faut laisser une chance aux sanctions économiques; ces taux sont respectivement de 49% et 46% dans un sondage réalisé et publié mercredi soir par le quotidien USA TODAY.

BONN - La grande majorité de la population allemande (70%) est contre une guerre dans le Golfe, selon un sondage réalisé à la demande de l'ambassade saoudienne à Bonn.

PARIS - Pour 69% des Français, il n'est pas question de mourir pour le Koweït même si l'annexion de ce pays par l'Irak est condamnable, selon un sondage réalisé avant l'échec de la rencontre Baker-Aziz mercredi à Genève.

EAGER TO SALVAGE PEACE IN GULF

HERALD TRIBUNE: Europe mounts last-minute effort

PARIS - "The European allies, seeking to salvage chances for peace in the Gulf after the collapse of talks between Iraq and the US, accelerated efforts Thursday to promote an international conference on the Arab-Israeli conflict soon after Iraqi forces leave Kuwait. At the request of France and Germany, the EC called a meeting of its foreign ministers for Friday in Geneva to discuss new aspects of a peace plan that might induce Iraq to announce a withdrawal from Kuwait in the days remaining before the UN deadline... After their meeting, the ministers plan to meet with the UN secretary-general, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, who will be stopping in Geneva before proceeding to Baghdad on Saturday for talkswith president Saddam Hussein."

REUTER: Perez to offer Iraq UN force in Kuwait

ROME - "UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar will this weekend offer to send a neutral UN force into Kuwait if Iraq agrees to pull out and will also promise that US troops will not be involved, Italy said on Friday. Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis said a peace-keeping force for Kuwait from which the US and the other members of the anti-Iraqi alliance would be excluded would be the UN chief's main offer to Baghdad."

EASTERN EUROPE

THE EUROPEAN: Doubt over market-style Comecon

"... Draft proposals for the uninspiringly named Organisation for International Economic Co-operation (OIEC) will be presented at February’s final Comecon summit in Budapest. Unlike its predecessor, the new organisation is expected to forgo a decision-making role and become a place where members can discuss the difficulties of developing market economies... A leading eastern European lawyer says: ‘Once the division of assets is settled, the new body could disappear as members move closer to
the EC’. He believes there will be an expansion of the OECD, ‘possibly with associated status to the EC, followed by full EC membership and possible EFTA membership’.

Herald Tribune: Back down, Gorbachev tells Lithuania

Vilnius, Lithuania - "President Mikhail S. Gorbachev issued his most strongly worded threat to date to the breakaway Baltic republic of Lithuania on Thursday, telling Lithuanian leaders that they must immediately restore the validity of the Soviet Constitution or face the consequences. The Lithuanian president, Vytautas Landsbergis, immediately rejected Mr. Gorbachev’s message, declaring that the Lithuanian authorities would defend government and parliamentary buildings from attack."

Reuter: Economist elected Lithuanian prime minister

Moscow - "Economist Albertas Simenas was elected prime minister of the Baltic republic of Lithuania on Thursday, replacing Kazimiera Prunskiene, who resigned this week over price increases she sponsored. Simenas, 40, a member of the centrist faction in the Lithuanian parliament, pledged to organise a system to compensate people for the increases."

AFP: La Banque Mondiale poursuit l’aide à la Pologne

Varsovie - "...M. David Hume, chef de la représentation de la Banque Mondiale à Varsovie, qui a été reçu par le nouveau premier ministre, Jan Chrystsotf Bielecki, a indiqué que la Banque Mondiale consacrerait, d’ici à la fin de l’année fiscale en juin prochain, de 600 à 800 millions de dollars pour financer divers projets en Pologne: économie d’énergie, restructurations dans l’industrie, privatisation de la construction de logements, télécommunications."

Oil - IEA Meeting

Japan Times: "The 21 members of the International Energy Agency (IEA) are due to discuss in Paris on Friday what measures to adopt if war breaks out. In Bonn, Helga Steeg, IEA executive director, said in an interview with the German weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT that, if necessary, the agency’s crisis distribution system would be implemented. Under the system, the Paris-based IEA would determine which member states had enough oil and which were running short." (Article from DIE ZEIT available in the Press Review Section)

GATT Trade Talks

Reuter: Gulf crisis improves odds talks will succeed

Bonn - "The threat of war in the Gulf has improved chances of a successful completion of stalled world trade talks, Germany’s top negotiator said on Thursday. Lorenz Schomerus, assistant secretary in Bonn’s economics ministry, also told Reuter the talks could still fail if countries such as the US tried to pressure the EC into an ‘unconditional surrender’ of its farm policies... ‘The Gulf crisis makes it clearer than before how the world has become interdependent and how this mutual dependence is vital for trade and economic issues’, Schomerus said. Arthur Dunkel, GATT director general, is currently exploring when talks can be restarted and has called a meeting on January 15 to inform countries on the outlook for new talks."

Economies OCDE

Allemagne

La Tribune: Les excédents fondent

"L’excédent commercial de l’Allemagne unie s’est contracté de 60% en novembre en regard d’octobre. Si l’on prend pour référence le seul territoire de l’ex-Allemagne de l’Ouest, le déclin est encore plus net, avec un excédent commercial de 762 millions de marks 92,6 mrds de francs ‘seulement’, contre 10,6 mrds en novembre 1989. Il faut remonter à août 1981 pour trouver un résultat aussi faible."

United States

Reuter: Fed governor sees negative economic growth
MIAMI - "Federal Reserve Governor John LaWare said on Thursday that US economic growth in the fourth quarter of 1990 would be 'significantly negative' at the rate of about 2 or 3%. ' In spite of lower interest rates in the fourth quarter of 1990 there is likely to be a significantly negative growth rate in terms of GNP. My guess is in the neighbourhood of 2 or 3%', LaWare said."