

TOP OF THE BOX

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THE ITALIANS, THE IRISH AND THE EMS

I have been checking with the Irish and Italians, not least because of tonight's debate, in order to see when the present confusion about their attitudes towards EMS is likely to be dispelled.

ITALY

The position of the Italian Government is clear. They have decided despite the problems in Brussels to join the System on 1st January. This decision could, of course, be overthrown by Parliament. The issue was put to Parliament in a debate which began yesterday (December 12th) and has not yet come to an end. Early today there was a request by the Socialists for an adjournment for a special meeting of those Parties which to varying degrees support the Government. When that meeting is over the debate will be resumed and a final, decisive vote can be expected later this afternoon or this evening. The Italian Embassy expect it to be favourable. Should Parliament throw out Andreotti's proposal the Government will fall and there will have to be an election. This possibility is, in itself, believed to be sufficient to render an unfavourable vote improbable.

IRELAND

The Irish issued a White Paper on Monday, in which they give few clues about what they are going to do on the EMS. It simply states, correctly, that the pros and cons were still under consideration. There was a routine Cabinet meeting on December 12th (Tuesday) in which the subject certainly came up. The Cabinet do not expect a final decision before Friday afternoon. However, the Prime Minister may clarify the position a little before that time.

AR

ADAM RIDLEY