

Brussels, 11 March 1977

Speech by Mr. Roy JENKINS, President of the Commission of the European Communities, at the dinner given in honour of Mr. Mario Soares, Prime Minister of Portugal.

Mr. Prime Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
It is with particular pleasure that I welcome you and your delegation, Mr Prime Minister, in the name of the Commission, to Brussels.

We are very glad to have you here, Mr Prime Minister, you and your delegation, and we want this occasion tonight to be above all one of celebrating our friendship.

You, Mr Soares, have become the symbol of the new free and democratic Portugal. You have shown throughout your life courage and dedication for the ideals of freedom. You have fought dictatorship. You have sustained in exile the morale of your companions. You have organised and led your party, as you today lead the Government of Portugal with skill and inspiration.

Through the turbulences of the revolution you have been able to ally fortitude with the highest ability in persuading the Portuguese people to avoid pitfalls on their arduous road towards democracy.

May I assure you of our sincere admiration and of our warmest friendship in recognition of what you have done for your country and for the cause of democracy in Europe.

It is nearly three years since the people of Portugal shed the cloak of dictatorship and embarked on the inevitably difficult process of shaping democratic institutions. By this act Portugal

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simultaneously became reconciled with its historical tradition and its cultural heritage.

The Community very rapidly recognised the significance of the events taking place in Portugal through the provision of emergency aid and the agreements on the Protocols designed to bring closer trading relationships between Portugal and the Community and to make available a steady source of financial assistance.

Furthermore, a year ago, your country was welcomed into the circle of democratic nations represented in the Council of Europe.

Now you have embarked on the next stage of your progress towards the Community. You have told us today of the discussions you have been conducting in the capitals of our Member States: discussions which will have left you in no doubt of the collective wish of the Governments and peoples of the EEC to see Portugal take her place alongside them in the task of creating a new Community.

Your discussions will also have touched on some of the severe economic problems which confront you and which the Community is determined to help you resolve. We have talked about these matters today and we shall speak of them again tomorrow. It is, I think, entirely appropriate that the role of the Commission over the issue of Portugal's membership of the Community will be a central one and we look forward to broadening steadily our contacts with all parts of your administration and institutions in the months which lie ahead. You can be sure of our profound goodwill in the task of analysis, assessment and advice to Portugal and to the Member States of the

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Community which falls to us.

I believe there is a word familiar to Portuguese historians which is "oceanidad" and which describes the imaginativeness, the state of open-mindedness and also the determination of the brilliant navigators in the golden age of Portugal's history. I think that this same attitude is needed today to take the full dimension of the work which we want to achieve in common in the years to come.

Mr Prime Minister, we salute you with warmth and admiration and hope.