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IP(69) 118

INFORMATION A LA PRESSE • MITTEILUNG AN DIE PRESSE • INFORMAZIONE
ALLA STAMPA • MEDEDELING AAN DE PERS • PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 2 July 1969

Summary of the address by M. Jean Rey, President of the Commission, to the European Parliament on 2 July 1969, on the occasion of the debate on the General Report on the activities of the Communities in 1968

M. Rey recalled that he had made a speech introducing the General Report on 12 March last. This was an essentially political statement to which he intended to refer but which it would be pointless to repeat.

He was very grateful to the rapporteur, M. Corona, for the thorough, precise and very interesting work he had done.

He shared M. Corona's view that the solution of present problems depended essentially on the political will of the Community institutions and the Governments of the Member States to push ahead with the internal and external construction of the Community.

M. Rey considered that the difficulties experienced in discussing problems which were, after all, of limited significance, raised the question whether it would today be possible to negotiate and conclude the Treaty of Rome, that monument of imagination and political courage.

M. Rey then dealt with three problems:

- (a) First, as regards monetary policy, he emphasized that the Commission was giving this absolute priority and that if monetary policy on the one hand and the common agricultural policy on the other were not completely in line, it was not agricultural policy which must move backward but monetary policy which must move forward.
- (b) The second problem was that of industrial policy. M. Rey was glad the Council had begun discussion of the Commission's White Paper on the present state of industrial policy in the Community and stressed that here too much closer co-operation had to be organized on a plane higher than that of the segmented national markets.
- (c) Thirdly, M. Rey brought out the importance of the Commission's recent proposals in the social field, especially those on the recasting of the European Social Fund, which must cease to be a mere accounting instrument and become a genuine instrument of economic and social policy.

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In the final part of his statement, M. Rey looked at the problems which will face the Community between now and the end of the year.

In view of the fact that the transitional period of the Treaty will not be extended, a new financial regulation for the agricultural policy will have to be adopted, in connection with "own resources" which will have to be made available to the Community and the budgetary powers of the European Parliament will have to be strengthened - all by the end of 1969. It was, however, evident that these problems would be linked, not de jure but de facto, with other problems such as the resumption of efforts to enlarge the Community.

It would be remembered that as far back as 1967 the Commission had considered that the time had come to resume efforts to widen the Community and the Commission had not changed its opinion since then.

Winding up, M. Rey recalled the experience of 1963. The crisis which had dominated all that year was only overcome by a general agreement which, on the internal plane, provided for elaboration of the common agricultural policy and, externally, the political decision to participate in the Kennedy Round negotiations, while contacts were organized with the British Government in WEU.

In M. Rey's opinion the present situation, if not identical, was at least very similar, and it was, he felt, by an overall effort of the same nature that the Community would resolve its present problems between now and the end of the year. This would constitute a considerable advance along the road to a stronger and more unified continent of Europe.