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Bio

Biographical Note

WILHELM HAFERKAMP, Vice President of the Commission of the European Communities, Commissioner of External Relations

Wilhelm Haferkamp, a 10-year veteran of the European Community's executive body, the 13-member Commission, spent his formative political years struggling to help transform German society from post-war ruins to a democratic structure that would allow workers a voice in what became Europe's economic miracle.

Returning home to Duisburg as a wounded Eastern Front veteran, young Willi Haferkamp earned a degree in economics and social affairs at Cologne University (1946-49) before joining the trade union movement that would determine his future career. As a full-time officer in the German Trade Union Federation of the industrialized North Rhine-Westfalia area (1950-63), Haferkamp, with Willy Brandt and other young Social Democrats, began to evolve a program for Mitbestimmung--worker co-determination--that is now recognized as a vital cog in the German economic locomotive.

By 1953 he was deputy chairman and in 1957 chairman of the state trade union federation and a member of the federal executive board responsible for economic policy and worker participation. From 1958 to 1967 he served in the North Rhine-Westfalia Parliament and as a member of the Social Democrat group's presidium.

His first appointment to a European post was to the Consultative Committee of the European Coal and Steel Community and shortly after, in July 1967, he was made Commissioner responsible for energy policy, the Euratom supply agency and Euratom safeguards for the three merged Communities--ECSC, the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community.

"This was during a time when, in the economic field, just about everything which could go wrong, did go wrong," Haferkamp told John Palmer of London's Guardian earlier this year. But Haferkamp added, "We did have our successes. Perhaps most important of all we prevented the spread of protectionism in the Community."

In July 1970, Haferkamp was named Vice President of the Commission and, in addition to his other duties, given responsibility for internal markets and legal harmonization. In 1973, his portfolio was shifted to responsibility for economic and financial affairs, credit, and investment.

This year, Haferkamp's portfolio changed again. At 54, his trade union, economic and energy experience are considered particularly useful for the new appointment - as policymaker for external relations - virtually the European Community's foreign minister.

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