

'A success for Konstantinos Karamanlis' from Le Figaro (11 February 1976)

Caption: On 11 February 1976, the French newspaper Le Figaro comments on Greece's reaction to the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Nine to accept the Greek application to join the European Communities without the requirement of a pre-accession probation period.

Source: Le Figaro. 11.02.1976, n° 20 346. Paris: Le Figaro. "Un succès pour Constantin Caramanlis", auteur:Gerson, Harry , p. 3.

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The Common Market says 'Yes'

A success for Konstantinos Karamanlis

During their meeting on Monday, the Foreign Ministers of the Nine decided that negotiations for Greece's accession to the Common Market would be opened as soon as possible. They rejected any political precondition as well as any idea of a 'probationary period', thus contradicting the opinion of the Commission, which had wanted to delay Greece's entry until that country's economy was better able to cope with all the consequences of entry. As always, the negotiations that are to be opened with Greece will be fairly lengthy. Nonetheless, the Nine do not want them to be extended unnecessarily.

Athens:

From our special correspondent **Harry Gerson**

Mr Konstantinos Karamanlis expressed his satisfaction at the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Nine to reject the clause in the Commission's report proposing a transitional period before Greece's accession, as a full member, to the Common Market. As soon as the news was received in Athens, the Prime Minister declared that the complete integration of Greece as the tenth Member State of the EEC was a historic event for his country and that it confirmed the confidence that Greece now inspired internationally.

On 31 January 1976, Mr Karamanlis had made it known that he considered the Commission's reservations to be morally and politically unacceptable and convened the ambassadors of the nine Member States of the Community in order to inform them of his disappointment, while at the same time expressing his hope that the mistake would be rectified.

This has now been done. The news was well received by the population and, in particular, by the industrialists and retailers who see attractive prospects opening up.

In Athens, however, it is acknowledged that it would be as well to be cautious regarding the negotiations. They will be difficult, and they will entail changes to the economic structure of the country (especially to the agricultural sector). In economic circles, it is thought hardly likely that Greece will be able to apply the Treaty of Rome's provisions in full before the end of 1979.

By not wanting to delay the negotiation procedure, the Ministers of the nine Member States of the Community have, on the other hand, done Mr Karamanlis a big political favour. The Prime Minister had committed himself personally to this matter, and the Commission's reluctance had, in a way, been a blow to his own prestige. The decision of the Nine should also help him to confront opposition criticism of his policy. In truth, Mr Karamanlis has just achieved a great victory.

Some doubts still persist. People here are asking how the Greek economy will manage to bring itself into line with those of its partners, something that will require further price rises, less easily absorbed than in the other countries of the Community. A Greek workman earns roughly half as much as his French counterpart. A readjustment of Greek salaries will, therefore, be necessary so as to avoid discontent, a process which, given the current condition of the country's economy, it is difficult to imagine.