

'Greece to sign Treaty of Accession to the European Economic Community tomorrow' from El País (27 Mai 1979)

Caption: On 27 May 1979, the Spanish daily newspaper El País analyses the political situation in Greece on the eve of the signature by that country of the Treaty of Accession to the European Communities.

Source: El País. 27.05.1979. Madrid. "Grecia firma mañana el tratado de adhesión a la Comunidad Económica Europea", auteur:Vilaró, Ramon.

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Greece to sign Treaty of Accession to the European Economic Community tomorrow

Most Greeks are in favour of accession, although the political parties are not unanimous

Ramon Vilaró, special correspondent — Athens

The signing of Greece's Treaties of Accession to the European Communities, planned for tomorrow in Athens with many political figures in attendance, will represent an historic act in European political and economic life. The Greeks will have to wait, however, until 1 January 1981 for the treaties to come into force and for Greece finally to become the tenth member of the present Common Market, a Community that will conclude its process of enlargement towards the south with the possible accession of Spain and Portugal, probably in 1983, supported by Greece.

The Greeks are solemnly preparing the treaty-signing ceremony. The historic Zappeion Hall, in the centre of the Greek capital, halfway between Lycabettus and the Acropolis, will receive the President of the French Republic (the country currently holding the six-month presidency of the European Communities), Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and the Prime Ministers of Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Ireland and Luxembourg. The Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom and Denmark will be represented at Foreign Minister level. Konstantin Tsatsos, President of the Republic, and Konstantin Karamanlis, Greek Prime Minister, will be the hosts. For the Greeks, Tuesday 28 May will not be a holiday, contrary to recent rumours that fuelled expectations of a long weekend on the grounds of signing up for accession to the Common Market. For car drivers with even registration numbers, it *will* be a long weekend, since the new petrol-saving measures require the half with odd registration numbers to leave their cars in the garage, on pain of fines exceeding 40 000 pesetas.

Over 70 % of Greeks in favour of accession

Entry into the Common Market does not generate great popular enthusiasm, although militants in the political parties opposed to accession have not ruled out a symbolic anti-Common Market demonstration on Monday. For the time being the Greek socialists in PASOK, the 'orthodox' communists from outside Greece and the extreme left are simply organising political meetings to denounce what they see as the 'Europe of the multinationals, at the service of the United States and NATO'.

'We calculate that over 70 % of Greeks are in favour of joining the European Communities,' they declare in the EC Information Office in Athens. 'If we come to power in the next elections, we shall push for Greece to leave the Common Market,' they reply in PASOK's headquarters, from where its leader, Andreas Papandreou, states that rather than being anti-European, PASOK is against Greek economic and political decisions being dictated by Brussels. They are in favour only of commercial links with the EEC.

The anti-Common Market parties will not attend the signing ceremony, but they will be present at the official reception that Konstantin Tsatsos, President of the Greek Republic, will host for his European guests.

The controversy surrounding the Common Market has a markedly domestic political ring to it. For Prime Minister Karamanlis it means fulfilling the promise that he made the moment he returned to power, after the fall of the colonels' dictatorship in August 1974. This would be a substantial political success for a leader who, according to all Greek political observers, aspires to become President of the Republic when Konstantin Tsatsos's term of office ends in spring 1980.

Early legislative elections

The force of the Opposition's stance on accession to the EEC stems largely from this question. The power of Nea Demokratia, Karamanlis's party, could wane, and PASOK is relying on a healthy economic situation to increase its percentage of votes, which may rise from 25 % to 35 %.

Coming out against an agreement on accession to the Common Market negotiated by Nea Demokratia could be in the Opposition's favour, particularly in a country where the price index appears to be soaring and where it is predicted that entry into the Common Market will cause prices to rise. 'The Government is rejecting a referendum, and our party will denounce this agreement when we come to power,' they repeat in PASOK headquarters, citing the British case, which required Great Britain's Treaties of Accession to the EEC to be renegotiated when Labour came to power. From another perspective, other no less important forces, such as the Greek Orthodox Church, speak out against the 'moral dangers' of Greek entry into the Common Market. The Common Market does not appear to want to threaten this morality, as its treaties include an annex on the special status of Mount Athos, spiritual stronghold of the Orthodox Church, which women are barred from entering.

Communitisation of Greek–Turkish disputes?

The external dimension of the political implications of Greek entry into the Common Market is particularly interesting. The never-ending Greek–Turkish disputes (Cyprus, sovereignty in the Aegean Sea) may well *become a Community issue*. The EEC's 'political cooperation' work, in which Greece will take part from now on, could have an impact on certain decisions involving Athens and Ankara. The Turks, associated to the EEC with Greece since 1962, do not seem to be very enthusiastic about the latter's full membership of the Community 'club'. 'The most important aspect of this act for the Greeks is the sense of security arising from membership of this Community of European states,' they claim in the Press and Information Office.

No one wants to speculate, however, on what might happen in the event of a fresh military confrontation like the one on the island of Cyprus in July 1974. The analysis from the leftist Opposition is different: 'the Europeans, like the United States, will back Turkey, forcing Greece to accept its positions,' said a militant at the end of a very poorly attended anti-Common Market meeting.

At the moment the Turks are opposed to a full return by Greece to NATO's Defence Planning Committee, which it left in 1974 in the wake of the Cyprus crisis. The Government in Ankara wants to negotiate an adjustment in airspace limits and the definition of the extent of the continental shelf in the Aegean Sea — which, they say, is rich in oil deposits, despite the restrictions affecting Greek motorists — before Greece becomes a full member of NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), whose 'brand image' is almost always linked to the Common Market in Athens.

Despite the controversial climate in Greece surrounding the signing ceremony, the process seems difficult to reverse for a country that has so far remained outside the group of European parliamentary democracies at whose doors it is now knocking, although it invented the policy of democracy that underpins the European Communities.

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