

'Now we are ten' from The Guardian (29 May 1979)

Caption: On 29 May 1979, British daily newspaper The Guardian highlights the advantages of the recent European enlargement and welcomes the efforts made by Greece to accede to the European Communities.

Source: The Guardian. 29.05.1979. Manchester: The Manchester Guardian and Evening News Ltd.

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Now we are ten

Yesterday in Athens, the birthplace of democracy, Greece was accepted into the European Economic Community to the applause of existing members and to the muted cheers of the still-divided Greeks. President Giscard d'Estaing, as is his French wont, was tending to take the sole credit for letting Greece in. The Greek Opposition was still uttering warnings. Yet the deed was done and Hellas will presently rejoin its heritage, which is democratic Europe. There have been hesitations in the North, mainly lest Greece should revert to dictatorship. But on all the evidence that comes from Greece today they are unfounded.

Nor can Euro-grumblers rationally maintain that Greece will be a lame Euro-duck, a burden on her northern neighbours, dragging them back from the enticingly prosperous future which they all desire. The economic performance figures for democratic Greece are impressive, not to say enviable. The economic growth rate is six per cent and rising. The rate of inflation is 11.5 per cent and falling. The rate of unemployment (though some figures are dubious) is two per cent — a clear one per cent better than the famous target set for Britain by Beveridge in 1943.

It would be seemly, also, if those already within the European fold would stop implying that the Greeks are not only paupers but also creators of political instability. Greek democracy in its latest form (which is not, of course, by any means its first) has survived untroubled since July 19, in 1974. Since then no resurgent Colonel has raised his fascist head. What is more Greece, compared to Spain, compared — alas — to Northern Ireland, is a safe place in which to live.

Greece's reversion to the ancient Athenian form of government has, of course, meant that two points of view about Europe have come to the surface and have been widely aired. Mr Papandreou's Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (with strident, if minor, allies) has contended from the start that if Greece joins the Common Market Greeks will become the south European colonial dependents of the rich, dominant, north European controllers of the EEC's destiny. These fears need not be as real as they sound. Thanks to President de Gaulle's establishment of the right of veto Greece can defend itself from an impregnable position. Thanks to the Common Agricultural Policy Greek farmers should be able to export their agricultural surpluses to the rest of Europe without the considerations which now constrain the Yugoslavs.

Even so the existing Nine have a responsibility to ensure that the often malevolent curiosities of the CAP do not harm Greek farmers. As a largely agricultural nation the Greeks have the moral right (if not the legal one) to be consulted from today onward about modifications to the CAP. Its changing ramifications can affect the people of the Peloponnese no less seriously than they can affect the fortunes of the farmers of Calabria or south-west France.