

‘Spain steps up ties with EEC’ from the Brussels Times (13 May 1977)

Caption: Article published in the Brussels Times on 13 May 1977 on Spain’s gradual rapprochement with the European Communities so that it will not be left behind after the applications for accession submitted by Greece and Portugal.

Source: Brussels Times. 13.05.1977. Buxelles.

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Spain steps up ties with EEC

Following the lead of Greece and Portugal, Spain this week intensified its contacts with the European Common Market, which it hopes to join as soon as possible after next month's elections.

Rafael Orbe Cano, Spanish Under-Secretary of State for Industry who led a special economic mission to Brussels this week, predicted that Spain was "in a political, economic and social position to ask for membership" and that its total integration into the EEC would occur within the next five to ten years.

Commenting stoically on the speed of Spanish entry into the EEC, Cano said "in the history of peoples, one year more or one year less doesn't make a lot of difference."

Another member of the mission, Gabriel Ferrán, the Foreign Ministry official in charge of integration with the EEC, said the country's formal application for membership should come in mid-autumn of this year. The latter said that all political parties were in favor of membership and added that unlike Greece and Portugal, who opposed joint negoti-

ations and membership by the three for entry, Spain had at the moment no strong feelings about this issue.

The purpose of the high-level mission, which met with EEC and Belgian officials and industrialists, was to establish contact with this European establishment, explain Spain and seek information in return. "The EEC and Spain need to know each other and understand each other," noted Cano. During the two days here the team talked both generalities and specifics with EEC Commissioner in charge of industry Etienne Davignon, Belgian Foreign Trade Secretary Knoops, with the Belgian and EEC manufacturers' association and with the EEC Economic and Social Committee, an advisory group.

The mission noted that it was not here to negotiate but to explain Spain and make the process of Spanish integration easier. One particularly touchy subject they discussed with Davignon was the question of steel, where the EEC is in the process of trying to establish minimum prices and ward off low-priced competition

from countries like Spain. A steel industry official on the mission said Spain's steel industry was ready to enter the EEC and accept its treaties and that it is trying to play by the rules now in order to pave the way for membership.

Cano rejected contentions that the new Spanish government had neglected the economy which had run down while concentrating on political development of the country's new institutions. He ticked off a number of measures taken by the government to improve the Spanish decline and attributed the slump largely to the energy crisis.

Touching on another major issue, he said that although Spain lagged behind the rest of Europe, which had a tradition of involving trade unions in the decision-making process, it was committed to adapting and to finding the best way to achieve such participation.