

Speech by Walter Hallstein at the signature of the association agreement between Greece and the EEC (9 July 1961)

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[...]

Mr Rey has found in the Greek delegation partners who not only energetically defended the interests of their country — as was their duty — but also kept constantly in mind the mutual interest of both parties to the negotiations. For, reversing somewhat the philosophic remark of President Kanellopoulos, I would like to say: the future — the future of our association — has already begun in the negotiations. We did not face each other in these negotiations as opponents, but in a spirit of comradeship, in a European spirit.

This made it possible to achieve a result, the political and economic importance of which is equally great for both sides.

The Community thus confirms its open character. It is indeed no selfish enterprise working to the advantage of its members alone, but serves the strength and peace of Europe even beyond its own confines.

Greece confirms the political principles to which she has long been true. She strengthens her security by attaching herself even more closely to her old friends. At the same time she is providing her economy with a great opportunity. This economy is still in the stage of development, but, thanks to the diligence and restraint shown by the Greek people and to the achievements of a courageous and far-sighted Government, it is a healthy economy. Under the Association it is to be brought step by step, by careful advance and without any sudden changes, into line with the level of the countries of our Community. Both industry and agriculture in Greece will benefit from this — through development aid and through access to a great market of 160 million people with a high standard of living.

We are certain that this work will succeed, but the process will not, of course, be automatic. It will be the result of close co-operation between Greece and the Community. We shall meet on a footing of equality in the Council of Association and there, shoulder to shoulder, set about the task of imparting life and vigour to our Treaty.

We are happy that today the first treaty of association between the Community and a non-member country is being signed, and we are doubly happy that it should be with Greece. This country is dear to the heart of every European as one of the fountain heads of European culture. Spiritual currents have gone forth from this land which has given their unmistakable stamp to the personality of Europe. We would not know the True, the Beautiful and the Good without the wisdom which was once bequeathed to us by Greece. It is therefore with a feeling of deep satisfaction that we give a new and contemporary form to our communion with this country.