

Address by Konstantinos Karamanlis at the signature of the association agreement between Greece and the EEC (9 July 1961)

Caption: On 9 July 1961, the Greek and European representatives attend a gala dinner in Athens following the signature of the association agreement between Greece and the EEC. In an address given at the dinner, Constantin Caramanlis, President of the Greek Council of Ministers, welcomes the new link between the Greek people and the Community.

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Allow me on behalf of the people of Greece to welcome you here tonight and to make you the heralds of our cordial good wishes to the allied peoples, our friends, whom you represent.

In the minds of the Greek people, the European Economic Community is not only an economic association. For us it is also a unity of much greater importance, with a political mission of far wider scope. If we are the first to have sought association with the Community, it is because we were inspired by the firm belief that the economic unification of Europe will lead to real European unity and so to a strengthening of democracy and peace throughout the world...

The cornerstone of the new Europe was laid in Rome. Without wishing to exaggerate the importance of my country, I think I may say that here in Athens another event is taking place today which will make a considerable contribution to the consolidation of this new Europe. Today the family of the strong economic countries which you represent welcomes into its midst a country at the critical stage of its economic growth. This event deepens the character of the Community and is proof that the strong economic countries are moved by a feeling of responsibility in face of the problems of our time.

Through the association of Greece with the European Economic Community the Greek economy enters a new and decisive phase in its development.

The Greek people is fully aware that it is shouldering a difficult task. As it climbs the slope before it, Greece will have to make fresh efforts to expand its production and adapt itself to European conditions if it is to place its economy on a sound competitive basis in a vast market of 170 million consumers. But the Greek people also knows that the end of the road will also be the end of a long period of economic underdevelopment, bringing a better future for us and for our children.

The Agreement signed today provides the best possible conditions in which Greece can be associated with the Community. It has been the result of long and laborious negotiations...

These negotiations have, of course, not been without their difficulties and disagreements. But whenever differing points of view seemed to be leading to deadlock, the spirit of European understanding and solidarity managed after all to carry the day.

Full confirmation of this spirit can be found in the decision taken by the six Governments to sign the Agreement in Athens and in the fact that you are present here.

Greece sets very great store by this event. The choice of Rome and of Athens for the signing of the two basic agreements of the Community has symbolic value, for in these two cities was born the Europe which we are striving now to consolidate on firmer foundations.

The Treaty of Rome of yesterday and the Athens Agreement of today are milestones on our journey. Further progress will be needed before the task of unifying Europe is complete. We firmly believe that the time will come when Europe will include all the free European peoples without exception.

A strong and unified Europe will be the soundest guarantee, not only of its own survival, but also for the strengthening of freedom in the world. For in the last analysis it is in Europe that the fate of free man will be decided.