

## "We have been hoodwinked" from Der Spiegel (29 December 1980)

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## ‘We have been hoodwinked’

### **Spiegel Editor Mareike Spiess-Hohnholz on the hopes and fears about the EC in Greece**

Athens, late November 1980, warm, no wind and, as in a good many years, an Indian summer.

For days now, just as in high summer, smog, ‘the cloud’, again causes apprehension as it is observed, morning after morning, hanging over the city. Sometimes it is over Kolonaki, and sometimes it floats at a leisurely pace south westwards to take up a position over Plaka Square.

All those responsible for the health of the three million or so people who live in Athens are well aware that, in two days at the latest, the interaction of the cloud and the daily new output of exhaust fumes will become a hazard. These authorities could close the schools, they could put the hospitals on alert as a precaution, they could ban cars from the streets, alternating according to the final number on their registration plates: even numbers one day, odd numbers the next; they could ...

But two days later the Indian summer is seen off by a downpour, a gale drives the cloud across Lykabettos Hill by nightfall, it is as if factory fumes and exhaust gases had never met all round the Acropolis, and the lights of the city are sparkling as purely as dew drops in the sun at dawn.

Following an ancient principle in Greece had once again turned out to be the wiser course: ‘Tha doume, ti tha jini’: just wait, and we shall see what happens.

The attitude of the Greeks to 1 January 1981, the final date when they become full members of the ‘EOK’, the European Community, is the same as to the cloud. The period of anticipation is characterised by irrational fears and scurrilous hopes, but there is little rational explanation on the part of the fathers of the people.

Since 1962, for a whole 18 years since Greece became associated with the EC, the country has become practised in the art of waiting, with the approaching event admittedly almost passing into oblivion.

It was only brought to mind by the fact that, for more than a year now, the politicians have been introducing a new slogan in a style ranging from rolls of thunder (Opposition) to permanent jubilation (Government): ‘En opsi tis entaxeos’ — in view of accession (to the EC).

In view of accession, for example, the Greeks were to modernise their traffic lights and also give up their siesta — with the aim of adapting to EC working hours.

In view of accession, the owners of small and dilapidated industrial premises were urged, with all due caution, to consider making investments instead of thinking of Lalaounis jewellery for their wives, villas by the sea, or a dowry for their daughters — and this because of concerns about competitive ability.

The trade unions should allow reason to prevail, in view of accession — and that is with an inflation rate of 25 %. Altogether, the phrase ‘in view of accession’ became such a familiar expression that it was inadvertently let out over lunch at the home of a Greek journalist, whose nine-year-old daughter had decided that from now on she did not want to see her father slurping the dressing out of the salad bowl: that’s not acceptable in Europe.

And yet, in spite of all the hectic exchanges of words, there has never been a new EC member that was so unprepared when it arrived to make its bed in the lap of its partner, in the very un-cosy fortress of regulations that is Brussels.

While President Konstantin Karamanlis sees the entry of Greece as the pinnacle of his career, Prime Minister Georgios Rallis is attempting to calm the fears of the subjects.

At the time of his country's association with the EC, Karamanlis had once said that the Greeks only had to be thrown in at the deep end, and they would soon learn to swim. Rallis stated: 'The Greeks will not be in for a cold shower on 1 January. Certainly, there will be nothing else for it but to swim, but that happens with every country that has changed its way of life as we are now going to have to change ours.'

'Ten thousand million drachmas net in the first year', 423 million marks, is what the Prime Minister is expecting from the coffers of the EC. This sum is one of the very few actual figures quoted at this time. Otherwise, the EC/Europe remains a panacea for one and the root of all evil for the other.

'We are walking barefoot across broken glass and heading into the EC' is, for example, the note of panic struck by the magazine 'Tachydromos'. In contrast, the newspaper publisher Heleni Vlachou is pleased at the thought that Greece, a country that throughout its history was supposedly 'protected' or actually attacked, but was 'always alone, is now part of a family'.

Whereas the left-of-centre Liberal politician and economics professor Ioannis Pasmazoglou hurls a 'categorically positive' at EC/Europe, the left-wing Socialist Andreas Papandreou gives his supporters ammunition with the plain and simple rhyme: the EC and NATO, one and the same 'syndicato'.

It is certainly flattering for all Greeks to hear someone like Giscard d'Estaing claim that 'Europe is coming back to Greece' and recalling that the daughter of a Phoenician king, who, according to Greek mythology, was abducted and seduced by Zeus in the guise of a bull, subsequently gave her name to an entire continent, indeed to an entire culture.

However, in the opinion of the Athenian journalist Pavlos Bakojannis, it is exceptionally unfortunate to spend too much time cherishing this 'ancient ancestor thing'. For he sees the Greeks as still hovering 'between the culture of Ancient Greece and the quest for its present-day identity.'

According to Bakojannis, the culture of modern Greece is still 'in the making'. However, instead of seeking its roots where they are actually to be found — in a cross between European and Asian-cum-Oriental culture, in accordance with the geographical position of Greece, that is, in the Mediterranean region, the descendants of the Hellenic people are now set far too much on the one-way street of Europe.

Concern about 'our national, distinctive face, our soul' is also being expressed by the author Antonis Samarakis, as his expectation of the EC, the 'cold-blooded system', is the 'pollution of our inner environment'. And, by this, he does not just mean the influx of pornography and drugs but also the Brussels 'machine', which will sooner or later render the Greek people less original, less spontaneous, and less warm-hearted.

A three-day German-Greek symposium was held at the University of Tübingen as long ago as in May 1979 in order to consider from every angle all the legal and institutional, economic and political aspects of Greek entry.

However, when facing the assembled prominent academics and this symposium that was 'theoretically very well-founded', the Minister of State from the German Foreign Ministry, Klaus von Dohnanyi, was unable to stop himself from pointing out to the gentlemen present that 'our problems are predominantly of a practical nature' and that their solution would require 'skilled political' handiwork.

There is a huge shortage of this in Greece, although not only there. Ms Vlachou, the publisher, who, at the time of British accession to the EC was in exile in London because of the dictators in power in Athens, recalls that: 'In spite of all the campaigns in every branch of the media to inform the public, the British thought that, from that moment onwards, they would have to give up their bacon and eggs and eat frogs for breakfast.'

Yet the level of ignorance of many people affected by accession to the EC remains alarming. To date, it is only the youngest Greeks who may imagine that the information that they have been given is relatively free

of illusions. The children's book entitled 'The Common Market' answers the question 'EOK — good or bad?' with the succinct response: 'The answer is somewhere in the middle.'

In the 'Dragon' Café in the iron-mining town of Lavrion in Attica, Dimitris, a casual worker, thinks: 'EOK is a good thing, because we will get the same wages as the Germans, because cars will become as cheap here as they are everywhere else in Europe and, above all, because I will then be able to work anywhere in Europe.'

Dimitris is not aware that he will have to wait in line for another seven years for his European job, or that the dream of a cheap car will also remain nothing more than a dream. In order to compensate in advance for the abolition of customs duties, the government doubled the already very high level of special tax on cars a year and a half ago and sees no reason to abolish it again: it is claimed to be not a customs charge but an 'internal consumer tax'. Therefore, the price of a VW Golf remains firmly at 21 000 marks.

The forestry worker Leonidas expresses himself more sceptically: 'Nobody agrees to be partners with someone if it is not in their own interest. They want us, but we don't want them.'

'It is easy to break one stick', says Anastassios, a retired ship's captain, 'but not so easy to break ten at the same time. Once our farmers have learned to plough the fields the way our seamen know how to sail the sea, then nothing can go wrong with the EOK.'

In the 'Frangou' Café, the meeting place of the wine and olive growers from the village of Spata, the winegrower Spyros sneers: 'We will be eating with golden spoons, that is all that the government has so far said about joining the EOK.'

In and around Spata, once conservative and staunchly loyal, Papandreou's EC and NATO propaganda, which he has, to date, moderated only for foreign audiences, has fallen on fertile ground.

For it is here, of all places, that 70 % of the cultivated land, on which grapes for the famous retsina are grown and where olives of exquisite quality flourish on trees that are in some cases a thousand years old, is to be compulsorily purchased for the planned construction of a new major airport for Athens.

'NATO wants the airport', is the suspicion of Nikolaos, who is also a winegrower, 'and we are supposed to let them rob us of our land so that we can be sent out into the EOK as labourers. We have been hoodwinked, completely stitched up.'

A broadly-based information campaign began recently, at a cost of 50 million drachmas (a good 2 million marks), running on television and radio, in newspapers and magazines; and, for the first time, brochures and leaflets are being distributed. 'Pure propaganda', was the verdict of a senior official at the national bank on the information value of these initiatives.

The EC Minister, Georgios Kontogeorgios, rejects the accusation that this campaign has possibly come too late: 'We think that this is exactly the right time, because it is now that everyone is talking about the EOK and now that interest has been fully awakened.'

There is also controversy about the timing envisaged for the publication — finally, after numerous revisions — of the 90 volumes of a total of 45 000 pages of EC regulations in Greek. The date is to be 31 December 1980. The next day, Greece will be a full member, and then, to the despair of the Athenian law professor, Michail Stathopoulos, 'we shall have legislation in force that nobody has yet been able to read.'

In an article entitled 'In view of the collision', the author and publicist Nikos Dimou recommends that his disconcerted compatriots should emulate the hero in a well-known anecdote who managed to play chess the way other people play poker: by bluffing.

Dimou states: 'The EOK has Heidelberg and Oxford, but we, in contrast, have the University of Tinkering

and the University of Tomfoolery.’

The Greeks provided a foretaste of this early in December in Brussels, when the Council of Agriculture Ministers was discussing prices and subsidies for 14 Greek agricultural products.

It did not help the case of Greek Minister of Agriculture, Athanassios Kanellopoulos, that he had managed to seek out a pearl of wisdom from the Ancient Greeks for each product. The future partners remained unmoved and rejected the majority of the demands made by Greece.

His French colleague even gave him an ultimatum: if no agreement had been reached by 18 December, Greek agriculture would have to forego the benefits of the common agricultural policy in the coming year. However, at the last minute, a compromise was found.

The Community had not only regarded the demands of Greece as quite excessive, it also questioned the statistical information provided by the Modern Hellenes, which had been used by Athens as a basis for bringing prices into line and in calculating subsidies and other support funding.

For example, when asked for a figure for the total area of land under cultivation, Athens had provided a total number of hectares that was three times the area of the entire country.

The Commissioner for Agriculture, Finn Olav Gundelach, said: ‘The Greeks have to understand that it is not the EC that is joining Greece, but Greece that is joining the EC.’

And: ‘We have accepted Greek mythology and the Greek alphabet here, but we cannot do the same with the system that the Greeks use to fabricate their statistics.’