

'Papandreou's Greece: Farewell to Europe?' from Europe (19 October 1981)

Caption: In his editorial of 19–20 October 1981, Emanuele Gazzo, Director of Agence Europe, expresses concern at the consequences that the election victory of the Pasok and the accession to power of Andreas Papandreou might have for Greece's European Community policy.

Source: Europe. Dir. of publ. RICCARDI, Lodovico ; Editor GAZZO, Emanuele. 19.-20.10.1981, n° 3231. Brussels.

Copyright: (c) Agence Europe S.A.

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/papandreou_s_greece_farewell_to_europe_from_europe_19_october_1981-en-f3e081a5-7761-49a1-9106-e5ef154b3d97.html

Publication date: 16/09/2012

Papandreou's Greece: Farewell to Europe?

The result of the elections in Greece, with the coming to power of the PASOK and of its leader, Andreas Papandreou, is very important in many respects, both general and particular, for the West, for Europe, and for Greece.

A first impression allows us to say that this result has conformed to a trend that has very clearly appeared in public opinion in almost all parts of the world: the trend for change. The desire for stability of power seems to have lost all attraction; henceforth, change is of the essence. One could say that the acrobat's balancing pole is moving faster everywhere. We have only to think of the complete somersault that has bounded into US priorities; of the coming to power of Mitterrand in France; of the nomination, for the first time in 35 years, of a "laic" as head of the government in Italy; or, in Norway, of the return to power of the Conservatives. In the same fashion, it is the desire for change which seems to have opened up the path to success for Social-Democracy in Great Britain but, contrariwise, to have pushed the German Social-Democracy into a minority....Change, in itself, is not synonymous with instability: rather, it is the proof of the vitality of a democratic society. But, on the condition that it can be changed.

A second impression is one that concerns the West in general and, in particular, its security which, as we know, is threatened from the outside as well as from the inside. The Soviet news agency, "Novosti", rejoices in the victory of the Pasok, and notes that last spring, Papandreou had welcomed Mr Brezhnev's proposal for a "denuclearisation" in the Mediterranean and the Balkans. "The policy preached by the Pasok can become reality if the new government keeps to the electoral promises of the party," Novosti concluded. Be that as it may, Papandreou's anti-Turkish and anti-American feelings are well enough known to justify the fear that the defence of the "southern flank" situation becomes critical and, as a consequence, the need to strengthen Turkey.

Let us turn to Europe, that is, to the Community, of which Greece became a full member in January 1981. The hostility of the Pasok's leader to keeping Greece in the Community is well known. At the moment Greece's entry was decided, he condemned the fact that the Community policy would prevent Greece from having an economic policy more geared to its own interests. He noted: "As the Community's recent history has proved, the big countries can afford to deviate from present procedures, something which a small country like Greece could never do." He added, "in the Community, regional development problems are only a small issue....The economic advantages to be had from the Common Agricultural Policy are given at the expense of regions with weaker structures." Mr Papandreou is not far wrong here, and the Community should have heeded these warnings. Perhaps he will be "able to push for the much-needed changes in the institutions and economic structures from within. However, he said earlier, "When it comes to power Pasok will ask the Greek people to decide in a free referendum - having been fully acquainted with the facts - on the country's membership in the European Community." He will not obtain this referendum without the consent of President Karamanlis, and this seems to be out of the question. Nevertheless, the possibility is still there. Looking beyond the present circumstances, the question which next arises is very serious: if with every election, or change of leadership, it became possible to challenge membership of the Community or its principles, the very foundations of the Community pact, which is irreversible by nature, would be destroyed. Although it is true that nothing lasts for ever, it is extremely dangerous to build on sand or to against history.

Having said this it would be premature to pass judgement on the future action of a government which has a comfortable though multi-colour majority behind it. For example, it has the support of a certain Mr Mavros who, two years ago, spoke of the Community as: "the safeguard of peace and pluralist parliamentary democracy in Western Europe." He also emphasized: "the need for joint European defence." The majority has no Communists in its ranks. They did not profit from the wave of "change". Mr Papandreou, son of Papandreou, will most certainly work for change but he is also a product of a system. It should be noted that he has named beating inflation as his top priority... a very cunning ruse.

Emanuele Gazzo