

'Questions concerning Spanish accession to the EEC' from El País (11 April 1985)

Caption: On 11 April 1985, two months before the signature by Spain of the Treaty of Accession to the European Communities, the Spanish daily newspaper El País speculates on the future role the country will be able to play in Europe.

Source: El País. 11.04.1985. Madrid. "Interrogantes sobre el ingreso de España en la CEE".

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Questions concerning Spanish accession to the EEC

Everything seems to indicate that Spain and Portugal will finally become full members of the European Economic Community (EEC) on 1 January next. This is undoubtedly an event of historic importance. When the Europe of the Twelve becomes an irreversible fact it will be possible to say for certain that the political transition in Spain is over and that the process of political normalisation has been completed. Democratic opposition to Francoism has always had two priorities: return of the freedoms confiscated by the regime and membership of Europe. The Socialist government has proved to be in no way inferior to those who have negotiated on Spain's behalf since Marcelino Oreja first applied for membership of the EEC in 1977; it has now achieved the main objective — accession to the EEC. The details will be discussed when the time comes for a technical evaluation of the terms of accession, chapter by chapter. The main aspect then will be to identify the hidden costs of Spain's new European status. Membership of the EEC raises a host of practical questions. Which country will benefit most from modernisation of the Spanish railways? What tanks will be purchased for the Spanish army? Which company will secure the huge contract, worth over 100 000 million pesetas, for the renewal of Iberia's fleet of DC-9s? And so on.

Another cost to be paid is membership of NATO. There can be little real doubt that agreement with the EEC was made possible by the offer of membership of the Atlantic Alliance — in a form yet to be determined — as a *quid pro quo*. The promise by Felipe González's government to hold a referendum on NATO provided an optimal psychological basis for joining the Community. De Gaulle's veto kept the United Kingdom lingering on the fringes of the EEC for years, but that in no way prevented it from being one of the pillars of NATO. Foreign Minister Fernando Morán has denied more than once that, in the case of Spain, the Ten established a link between the EEC and NATO. That is to deny the obvious. In any case, the Spanish people has a right to know the whole process of the negotiations, both official and unofficial.

As for the negotiations themselves, there remain a few loose ends of a secondary nature that are nevertheless quite important. A preliminary critical evaluation shows that the results differ greatly from sector to sector and from product to product. Industry has not come off badly, with the gradual abolition of Spanish customs barriers and quotas *vis-à-vis* the Ten over a period of seven years. The fisheries sector has also done well: 18 000 tonnes of hake in EEC waters is twice our present catch. As with regard to migrant workers, we are clearly better off inside the EEC than on the fringes.

The outcome for agriculture is perhaps the most debatable in the short term. In June 1984 Spain's negotiators accepted a two-stage arrangement for integrating our fruit and vegetables sector in the Community. In the historic night of 28 to 29 March, when final agreement was reached, the position regarding fruit and vegetables remained basically unchanged, i.e. third-country status for a period of four years. Spanish citrus fruits will not benefit from the same customs privileges *vis-à-vis* the EEC as those from Morocco until five years after accession. Spain has failed to make good its pledge to render the two-stage arrangement null and void.

When it came to agriculture, the negotiators bowed to the terms imposed by the French and shifted Spain's original position. The spirit of the Community required an opening up on both sides. Instead, barrier was raised against barrier. The Community countries have defended themselves against our most competitive sector, fruit and vegetables; we have defended ourselves against the least competitive sector, i.e. northern products, and in smaller quantities than hoped for. But that is no reason for facile polemics about farm incomes, which will be protected. The problem concerns the balance of payments.

The fundamental issue was best described by Eduardo Punset, one of Spain's earlier negotiators. Asked why Spain really needed to join the EEC, apart from political considerations, he replied that the EEC house might be leaky but that it was pouring with rain outside. And he was quite right. The costs are not high enough to warrant objections to full integration into Europe. No doubt we shall have to uproot some vineyards and olive groves, finish restructuring the iron-and-steel sector and close some businesses. However that may be, the list of closures would be longer if we did not join the EEC, an entity which has no choice but to expand

or die. With accession, other businesses will open. That is one more challenge for an entrepreneurial class more used to protectionism than to a real market economy. Joining the EEC, even at the behest of a socialist government, means joining free-market Europe.

Along with Spain, Portugal will also join — another good opportunity to strengthen historical and human ties between two peoples that have turned their backs on each other despite the fact that they could not be geographically closer. Membership of the EEC obliges the two countries to negotiate a fisheries and trade agreement that would perhaps be impossible to achieve by other means. The border between Spain and Portugal will disappear, at least for people. And that may raise problems for the Spanish labour market, where prevention will be better than cure.

At all events, what has been negotiated, in the great majority of cases, are temporary waivers to EEC rules. In 10 years' time, Spain will be fully integrated in the Community.

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