

'Portuguese "rediscovery" of Europe revitalises spirit of Monastery of the Hieronymites' from the Diário de Notícias (13 June 1985)

Caption: On 13 June 1985, the Lisbon daily newspaper Diário de Notícias reports on the official ceremony, held in Lisbon the previous day, to mark the signing of Portugal's Treaty of Accession to the European Communities.

Source: Diário de Notícias. dir. de publ. Mesquita, Mário. 13.06.1985, nº 42 455. Lisboa. "A nova «descoberta» portuguesa da Europa renovou espírito do mosteiro dos Jerónimos", p. 3.

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Portuguese ‘rediscovery’ of Europe revitalises spirit of Monastery of the Hieronymites

Yesterday the inner courtyard of the cloisters in the Monastery of the Hieronymites was Community territory: the voices of the President of the European Council (Bettino Craxi), the President of the Council of the European Communities (Giulio Andreotti) and the President of the Commission of the European Communities (Jacques Delors) revitalised the spirit of the limestone used to build the monument. In this setting, Portugal’s ‘rediscovery’ of Europe was treated like an affair of state.

The imposing decorative harmony of the cloisters took a back seat yesterday. Initials, armillary spheres, crosses, arms and medallions attesting to a task that began with the chisels of Manueline craftsmen were concealed by a huge canvas providing a backdrop to the speeches and signatures heralding Portugal’s accession to Community Europe, in a ceremony that combined the features of a baptism, an affair of state and a wedding.

The ministers plenipotentiary took a mere 10 minutes to sign Portugal’s Treaty of Accession, the ceremony concluding at 10.33 with Mário Soares signing his name in the book of the new Europe.

The event began at around 10 o’clock and was opened by the President-in-Office of the European Community, Bettino Craxi, with Mário Soares welcoming the foreign delegations just a few minutes later. Giulio Andreotti gave a short speech lasting nine minutes, followed by Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission. The formal signing of the Treaty of Accession began at 10.20 when the Belgian Prime Minister was called, followed by the representatives of the Community Member States, in alphabetical order and announced in the respective national languages.

Around 700 guests were present, but some seats were empty. The CIP Portuguese employers’ group, the CGTP trade union and the Communists showed their disapproval of Portugal’s accession to the EEC by leaving vacant the places reserved for them. All the other Portuguese political forces, business and employers’ associations, the diplomatic corps accredited in Portugal and former ministers and political leaders were present.

Spain was also there, represented by a delegation led by the President of the Spanish Government, Felipe González. The Spanish leader was the eleventh person to come to the table to sign, breaking the alphabetical order for reasons of protocol. Mário Soares was the final signatory.

Soares and González were particularly warmly applauded because they were representing the countries that were ‘discovering’ Europe and that Europe was discovering.

This was followed by the longest contribution of the morning, with Mário Soares giving a 21-minute speech marked by a sense of optimism. He was applauded when he cited the names of Adelino Amaro da Costa, Sá Carneiro and Mota Pinto as significant players in Portugal’s accession to the Community. He enunciated the name of Ramalho Eanes so carefully that it generated one of those silences that people use to try to interpret the speaker’s meaning and emotions by weighing each syllable. Journalists looked at each other, and the physically absent President of the Republic thereby took his place in the cloisters where accession was confirmed.

Another name never overlooked by Mário Soares is António Sérgio, and others present included Jaime Gama, Ernâni Lopes and António Marta, while references were also made to the Presidents of the regional governments of Madeira and the Azores.

The final applause of the morning was reserved for Spain, however, when Mário Soares spoke of the relations between the two countries in the peninsula.

At 10.55 the European Community authorities, heads of government and Portuguese leaders made their way to Belém Palace, just over 500 metres beyond the exit from the monastery. At the President of the Republic’s official residence the Community ministers plenipotentiary were received by Ramalho Eanes.

All this took place under the discreet vigilance of the security staff, whose shoulders bore a heavy responsibility.

Portugal was now officially the eleventh Member State of the European Community.

The Community delegations present at the signing of the Treaty of Accession were led by the following: Belgium, Wilfred Martens (Prime Minister); France, Roland Dumas (Foreign Minister); United Kingdom, Geoffrey Howe (Foreign Secretary); the Netherlands, Ruud Lubers (Prime Minister); Italy, Bettino Craxi (Prime Minister); Greece, Yannis Harambopoulos (Foreign Minister); Denmark, Paul Schluter (Prime Minister); Luxembourg, Jacques Poos (Foreign Minister); Ireland, Garret Fitzgerald (Prime Minister) and the Federal Republic of Germany, Hans-Dietrich Genscher (Foreign Minister).

It came to light meanwhile that Mário Soares had drafted a personal message to be forwarded to President François Mitterrand, presenting ‘fraternal greetings’ and referring to the day when the President of the French Republic had travelled to Lisbon to tell the Portuguese Government that accession was irreversible.

Particularly striking, however, among the guests lined up in the cloisters of the monastery, was the presence of Ambassador Siqueira Freire. This was the diplomat who, on 28 March 1977, acting as Portugal’s representative to the Community, submitted the formal application for accession to the European authorities in Brussels.

The former President of the European Parliament, Simone Veil, and Roy Jenkins, who headed the European Commission between 1977 and 1981, were also present in the cloisters.

The many eminent figures from Portuguese political life included Pinto Balsemão, Freitas do Amaral, Cavaco Silva, Maria de Lurdes Pintasilgo, Melo Antunes, Lucas Pires, Mota Amaral, Alberto João Jardim, Vítor Constâncio, Rui Vilar, Silva Lopes, António de Spínola, Lemos Ferreira, Sousa Leitão, Lopes Cardoso, Azeredo Perdigão, Cáceres Monteiro, Miguel Galvão Teles and Manuel Alegre.

After the reception, when guests greeted the President of the Republic, the Portuguese authorities hosted a lunch in the upper corridors of the cloisters.

Previously, around 2 million Portuguese citizens had followed the live broadcast of the ceremonies on television.

On the fringes of the events, outside the monastery, a ‘hard core’ waited in the hope of getting close to some of the eminent persons who had come from the European capitals. In a demonstration of appreciation, some of them shouted ‘Mário, Mário’, when the Prime Minister took his place in the procession of heads of government making their way to Belém Palace, while a group of workers from the Messa factory did not squander the opportunity to draw attention to the prospect of being owed six months’ wages. These matters will henceforth no longer be said to be happening ‘out there in Europe’, but will begin to be thought of as ‘here in Europe’.

The day of the treaty began at the Tower of Belém, however, where the Community delegations, which began to arrive at 8.50, were received with a guard of honour by the Portuguese Prime Minister.

The first to arrive at the old tower was the Community Secretary-General, R. Spall.