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GREECE
12 June, 1980

PASOK AND THE LEFT IN GREEK POLITICS

*Her Majesty's Ambassador at Athens to the
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*

SUMMARY

Does PASOK (the Panhellenic Socialist party of Andreas Papandreou) have totalitarian ambitions? What is the state of the Left in Greece (paragraphs 1 and 2)?

2. No social democratic tradition in Greece. The political choice since the civil war between conservative and liberal Centre parties, with the Communists excluded from power. Seven-year military dictatorship radicalised the old Centre and created the conditions for Papandreou's party of the Left (paragraphs 3-6).

3. PASOK a one-man band (paragraph 7).

4. Papandreou's policy populist, socialist, nationalist; anti-American and anti-NATO (paragraph 8) but less doctrinaire and more pragmatic as elections get closer. Emphasis now on "change" rather than "socialism" (paragraph 9). Measure of acceptance of European Community and development of closer links with West European socialist and social democratic parties (paragraph 10).

5. Ambassador fears that, despite Papandreou's new realism in certain areas, a PASOK Government would bring economic crisis and governmental chaos (paragraph 12).

6. Much too early to predict whether PASOK can win next elections. Papandreou unlikely to form coalition with Communist Party (paragraph 13).

7. Papandreou does not, Ambassador judges, aspire to establish a one-party State. He knows the Army would stop him if he tried. Our misfortune that the call for change in Greece, which has force, entails a foreign policy inimical to Western interests and a probability of domestic instability (paragraphs 14 and 15).

(Confidential)
My Lord,

Athens,
12 June, 1980.

The Athens correspondent of *The Times* asked the new Greek Prime Minister, George Rallis, at a recent Press conference whether he could guarantee that if the Panhellenic Socialist Party (PASOK) of Andreas Papandreou were given a majority vote by the Greek people, it would be allowed to assume power smoothly. Mr. Rallis replied that the people's decision would, of course, be respected. The

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Defence Minister, and Rallis' rival for the Office of Prime Minister, Evangelos Averoff, put it rather differently: "the sovereign people would not give power to a party which I believe is aiming to establish a one-party State". What truth is there in this charge of totalitarian ambitions from one of Greece's most senior and respected politicians? And what is the state of the Left in Greece?

2. These questions are apposite at the present time. Left-wing parties took well over one-third of the vote in the most recent Greek Parliamentary Elections, in November 1977, and have continued to gain strength since. The next election must be held before November 1981. The two main parties of the Left, which will constitute the principal challenge to Mr. Rallis in that election, are PASOK, which pursues an idiosyncratic brand of militant socialism, and the Moscow-line Communist Party (KKE). Other smaller Left wing parties including the "euro-communist" Communist Party of the Interior (KKE Int) are unlikely to make a significant impact under the existing electoral system. The small parties of the Centre are between them also unlikely to win more than a small percentage of the popular vote.

What is the Left in Greece?

3. Greece has no social democratic tradition. Throughout most of the last 70 years, with intervals of war and dictatorship, power has alternated between large bourgeois parties of the conservative Right and the liberal Centre. The resistance to the Nazi occupiers gave the small pre-war Communist party its chance and forced many Greeks of vaguely Leftish tendencies, or of no political persuasion, into the ranks of the Communist-dominated resistance movement (ELAS and its civil counterpart EAM). The association stuck. A Communist takeover was only narrowly averted with British armed help in 1944. The civil war supervened to make the division of the nation more bitter and deep-rooted. As a result, the Greece of the 1950s was a country sharply divided between "national-minded" Greeks on the one hand and, on the other, Communists, fellow travellers and many of Left wing but not pro-Soviet beliefs who were tarred with the Communist brush from the days of the civil war. The Communist party, in this era of Papagos and the first Karamanlis Governments, was proscribed (though a Communist front party, EDA, flourished and in 1958 was able to amass 24 per cent of the popular vote). Those suspected of Communist or Leftish leanings or of a past association with ELAS/EAM were subject to administrative persecution and harassment. This division marked a whole generation.

4. It was the seven years experience of dictatorship from 1967 to 1974 which led to the dissolution of the pattern described above, of two large bourgeois parties in alternation, to the radicalisation of the Greek Centre and to the rise of PASOK. As a result of the Colonels' dictatorship, almost everyone in Greek politics shifted some paces to the Left. Responding to the mood, and filling the gap left on the death of his father, Andreas Papandreou founded his new party PASOK on neo-Marxist economics, a populist appeal, a desire for internal change after many years of rule by the Right or the military, and externally on anti-American and anti-NATO sentiments. The old Centre was crushed in the General Elections of 1977. Instead of alternation between Right and liberal Centre, Greece is now faced with a choice between the conservative Right and the socialist and populist Left. To the Left of PASOK, the Moscow-line Communist Party continues in the tradition established by its fellow-travelling forerunners in the 1950s and '60s, and is likely to continue to attract some 10 per cent to 12 per cent of the popular vote.

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5. Since 1974 there has been some success, mainly attributable to Karamanlis himself, in healing the old wounds of the civil war era. Harassment by the state of Leftists and Communists has virtually ceased. Since his succession to the New Democratic Leadership in early May, Mr. Rallis has made it clear that he will lead New Democracy from a centrist, moderate position. He has treated the Opposition with studied courtesy and correctness, and has spoken with conviction of the need to avoid a "national schism" such as that which led to the execution of his uncle in 1922. The political atmosphere now is milder than in the 'fifties or the early 'sixties.

6. But though Greece has come a long way on the road to national reconciliation, political divisions remain deep, deeper than in any other Western European country save those divided by religion or language. The rapid increase in prosperity in the 'sixties and early 'seventies and the skilful transition, with Karamanlis at the helm, from dictatorship to democracy have given the country the appearance of stability and relative calm. But in Parliament the polarisation between Left and Right is sharp. Papandreou's programme is a much more radical opposition to Government policy than was ever provided by the old Centre Union to Karamanlis' former ERE Governments. And in the country, PASOK has mobilised a large sector of the urban and agrarian population who, while no longer believing themselves the victims of actual persecution, are ready to accept Papandreou's contention that they are economically oppressed by the State and by big business.

PASOK today

7. In his despatch of 14 December 1977⁽¹⁾ entitled "The Rise of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement and its Implications", Sir Brooks Richards described the nature of PASOK and of Papandreou's socialism, his foreign policy and his personality. There is not much in that despatch that needs amendment two and half years later. PASOK remains better organised than any other political party in Greece except the Communist Party, though New Democracy has begun to catch up in the last 18 months. PASOK remains a one-man band. None of Papandreou's chief lieutenants have been allowed to share the limelight with him. Nor do they impress as men ready to cope with the problems of running this country. Members of the party's Parliamentary Group and Central Committee have, in recent months, been relatively accessible and willing to express personal opinions to me and my staff rather than, as in the past, simply echoing the views of their master. But it is difficult to envisage PASOK continuing to exist in its present form should Papandreou for any reason be unable to continue as leader—a contingency it would be unwise to ignore in view of uncertainty over his health.

8. The main lines of Papandreou's policy (which is PASOK's) can be shortly summarised. Andreas Papandreou is a populist, socialist, nationalist with elements of the dreamer in his make-up.

(a) Although he lived in the US for 20 years, becoming a US citizen and marrying an American, since his return to Greece in the early 'sixties he has been stridently anti-American. Though no lover of the Soviet Union, he finds excuses for Soviet action over many current issues. For instance, he relates the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to the NATO decision on theatre nuclear modernisation as effect following cause.

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- (b) He is for non-alignment and Greek withdrawal from NATO, which he regards as an instrument of the US and as responsible for the installation of the Colonels in 1967, for building up Turkey as the American "policeman" in the Middle East, and for siding with Turkey in Greek-Turkish issues.
 - (c) He has opposed Greek membership of the European Community saying that he would negotiate a "special relationship". The Community is an instrument of monopoly capitalism and of the multi-nationals, through which in Papandreou's language, Greece, a "peripheral" capitalist country, is exploited by the central "metropolitan" capitalist powers.
 - (d) He takes an extreme nationalist position on issues in dispute between Greece and Turkey, such as would be irresponsible in any Government.
 - (e) In domestic politics, Papandreou seeks to appeal to the under-privileged without offending the bourgeois lower-middle classes, small businessmen, and the intelligentsia. His main attack is reserved for large-scale capital and the multi-nationals. He has stated that PASOK would, on a selective basis, nationalise or "socialise" a proportion of the 100 largest Greek companies. These would include banking, the defence industries, pharmaceuticals, and mining. He says that he would not make the mistake of only nationalising loss-making sectors of the economy. He admits that he could take no action against the ship-owners who, if threatened by nationalisation would merely transfer their vessels to flags other than that of Greece.
 - (f) Papandreou's policies for dealing with inflation, the balance of payments and sluggish investment are—partly for reasons of prudence—not fully developed. However, they would include a combination of wide controls on credit expansion and monetary supply, the direction of available funds to "productive" sectors of the economy, and selective import controls.
 - (g) Papandreou would also emphasise the fashionable preoccupation with environmental protection. The Greek public have only recently woken up to the ravages brought about by pollution and unplanned development in the race for growth over the past two decades.
 - (h) He favours decentralisation and would set up regional and local elected councils with real powers. This also has wide appeal in a country where the capital city has grown disproportionately and where the municipal authorities have minimal financial powers. But it is hard to believe that if Papandreou achieved power he would willingly surrender the central control over the direction of policy that he has enjoyed within his party. Moreover, if he proceeded too fast and too carelessly with his plans for devolution it would be a recipe for chaos.
9. Papandreou's tactic in recent months, as he approaches an election at which he could, conceivably achieve power, has been to emphasise a less doctrinaire and more pragmatic approach. A considerable proportion of the party's representatives in Parliament and the majority of party supporters and potential voters do not understand and are not interested in socialist theories: what they want is change, meaning the replacement of the existing faces in the state machinery, and structural reforms in education (particularly the universities), the health services, and the economy of a kind which even New Democracy

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supporters recognise as necessary, but which have been blocked by vested interests and the inertia of the cumbersome state machinery. Particularly in the essentially conservative rural areas, where PASOK must hope to make substantial gains in the next elections, electors do not want an expansion of state ownership. Papandreou has recognised this and adjusted his strategy accordingly.

10. But it is in the field of foreign affairs that Papandreou has made the most important policy shifts. He has come round to a measure of acceptance of the European Community, agreeing that PASOK will participate in the European Parliament as a member of the Socialist Group and admitting privately that with Karamanlis as President there is no real possibility of a future PASOK Government holding a referendum on Community membership, as is official party policy. His attitude to West European socialist and social democratic parties, particularly to the West German SPD, has also changed significantly. To his party supporters, he explains the new eagerness to develop links with these parties in terms of their increasing independence from the US. Less is heard these days of PASOK's affinity with the "Socialist Parties of the Mediterranean" although links with the Spanish and Italian socialists are assiduously cultivated.

11. More generally a new realism has come into Papandreou's foreign policy, as presented to foreign observers, though to Greek audiences he uses most of the same old slogans about NATO and the US. Speaking at a private lunch I gave on 17 June, Papandreou said that he would have to live with Community membership and even hinted at the possibility of retaining a relationship with NATO; and he has been ready recently to assure foreign visitors that he will be in no hurry to close down the US bases in Greece.

12. The evolution of PASOK and Papandreou should not be exaggerated. His fundamental beliefs remain, I judge, damaging to Western interests. Nevertheless, the evolution suggests that Papandreou, as the prospect of power approaches, sees more clearly the constraints on his party were it to achieve office. The question is, whether this evolution is entirely tactical, designed to avert the possibility of intervention from any source to prevent PASOK achieving power. In that case, having achieved power, might Papandreou not revert to his original policies in their extreme form? It could be, but I doubt it. If he did it would almost certainly result in a constitutional crisis between Papandreou as Prime Minister and President Karamanlis, possibly leading to intervention by the military. What I fear rather, if PASOK were to achieve power, is a flight of capital, ensuing economic crisis, disarray in the direction of Government due to inexperience and factional struggle in PASOK, and the opportunity for mischief-making by the Communists. Papandreou's record in the 1960s does not inspire confidence in his capacity to govern. He has a record of alienating friends and colleagues. Though charming and reasonable in private conversation, he can be irresponsibly demagogic in public. And in office in the mid-1960s he succeeded in creating around him an atmosphere of faction and suspicion unparalleled in modern Greek politics.

13. It is generally believed that PASOK has increased its electoral support considerably from the 25 per cent it won in November 1977. At the same time the strains of six years in office have eroded New Democracy's support and its appeal is less without Karamanlis as party leader. It is too early to say whether the Government of George Rallis will be able to arrest these trends. New Democracy could well still win enough support at the next General Elections to form the next Government. But Papandreou has emerged as a serious challenger

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for power. The principal battle will be fought in the middle ground, particularly for the support of the 12 per cent of the electorate who voted for the old Centre party, EDiK, in 1977, but are unlikely to do so again. An inconclusive election result in which neither New Democracy nor PASOK win an overall majority in Parliament cannot be ruled out under the existing electoral system. It is possible that small political parties such as the Democratic Socialist Party, KoDeSo, or the rump of EDiK might hold a balance. But it is more likely that the Moscow-line Communist Party would do so. It is, in my view, unlikely that in such a situation Papandreou would enter a coalition with the KKE; this would be the surest way to provoke the armed forces, whose establishment remains essentially conservative and anti-Communist, into intervening in political life. If Papandreou were invited to form a Government, it is more likely that he would form a minority administration and call new elections in a relatively short time, as his father did in 1963/64.

14. At the end we are left with the enigma of Andreas Papandreou. Is this man, as his political opponents claim, the most dangerous man in Greek politics, a glib and charming devil who would reduce the country to chaos within a few months or work to install a one-party system? I fear the first, but I do not believe, as Averoff apparently does, in the totalitarian nature of PASOK. It is a populist party, built around a charismatic leader. Though claiming to be Marxist, it is Marxist Leninist neither in doctrine nor in organisation. If Papandreou achieves power, in order to implement a programme he will need to neutralise enemies and install friends in the civil service. This will be a difficult and disruptive process. But I do not believe that the end of the process, in Papandreou's mind, is a permanent grip on power for himself at the head of a one-party system. Even were he to desire this—which I doubt—he must know that the built-in defences of the present Greek democratic system are too strong, and that the road leading to a one-party system is blocked by the army's tanks.

15. I conclude from this analysis, as have my predecessors, that Andreas Papandreou would be bad for Western interests. A New Democracy Government is a better partner for the West. To say this is not to deny the force of Papandreou's call for change. There are many things which need changing in Greece, particularly in the field of social and educational policies. It has not, in my view, been healthy for Greek democracy or conducive to social progress that the Greek Centre-Left has had so little experience of power (in the last 25 years, only the period 1963-65). The cry "give the other team a chance", has greater force for the Greek voters at present, and many Greeks, not themselves all admirers of Andreas Papandreou, will probably vote for him for this reason. It is by no means certain that he will achieve power, but he may. It is the West's misfortune that the call for change in Greece entails a foreign policy inimical to our interest, and a probability of domestic instability.

16. I am copying this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives at Ankara, Bonn, Nicosia, Paris, Rome, Washington, NATO and the European Communities.

I am Sir

Yours faithfully

IAIN J. M. SUTHERLAND.

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