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**Britain and Northern Greece in the Twentieth Century.
Greek Accession and Prospects for the European Union**

Introduction

An ambassador's first formal act on arriving at a new post is to present a letter of credence, popularly known as credentials, to the head of the state to which he has been accredited. This letter, signed by his own head of state, sets out why he, or she, is a fit person to represent his, or her, country. As this is the first occasion on which I have the honour to address an audience in Greece, it may be appropriate if I display my credentials.

First, a word of reassurance. Despite my surname, I have no connection with Lieutenant-General the Honourable Sir Thomas Maitland, who, from 1816 to 1824, exercised his powers as His Majesty's Lord High Commissioner in and over the United States of the Ionian Islands from his palatial Residency in Corfu. The arbitrary and despotic conduct of "King Tom", as he came to be known, would have today earned him the accolade—to paraphrase Sir Edward Heath—"the unacceptable face of colonialism".

However, I have two direct family connections with the European Cultural Capital of 1997. My brother, Major Ian Maitland, landed at Piraeus on 16 October 1944. He commanded the only squadron of tanks in the armoured brigade. Having survived years of combat in the Western Desert, Sicily and Italy, he and his troops were expecting that British military intervention to prevent a communist conquest of Greece would be comparatively straightforward. They were mistaken. In the streets of Athens the problem they faced was not the formidable fire-power of their enemies, but rather how to identify them. Snipers' bullets from the midst of otherwise friendly crowds took their toll. In the following year Ian was based in what he then knew as Salonika and was

involved in deterring invasion from across the northern border from Albania to Turkey, and with planning Operation Roundup with Generals Bitsanis and Lavandikis. He received with gratitude the Commemorative Medal awarded by the Greek Government to members of the British forces who served and fought in Greece between 1941 and 1945.

Seven years later—in 1952—my cousin, Robert Dundas, was appointed British Consul-General in this city. He was an accomplished linguist and a student of the culture of the Mediterranean, a region in which he served in various capacities. The three years he spent in Salonika brought special pleasure to Robert and his wife, Pauleen, and their family; two of his sons accompanied him on an expedition to Mount Athos.

Greece's Application to Join the EEC

During those and subsequent years I was occupied elsewhere and it was not until 1975, when I took up my post as United Kingdom Permanent Representative in Brussels that I became directly involved in Greek affairs. Two years earlier the United Kingdom, together with Ireland and Denmark, had at last joined what was then the European Economic Community raising the membership from the original Six to Nine. Among the numerous dossiers with which I became familiar was one which concerned what the Community termed its “Mediterranean Policy”. This was an integral part of the relationship the Community sought to establish with the rest of the world.

In the crucial talks the British prime minister, Edward Heath, held with President Pompidou in Paris in May 1971 which paved the way for British membership of the Community, it had been accepted that the developing members of the Commonwealth would be accorded the same aid and trade advantages as were enjoyed by the former colonies of the original Six members of the Community under the Yaoundé Convention, which was to be superseded in 1975 by the Lomé Convention. This strand of the Community's external policy was intended to demonstrate that the obligations of the former colonial powers had not been neglected.

The Mediterranean Policy had a different objective. The member states were sensitive to the charge that the Community was “a rich

man's club". After all, the title "European Economic Community" given to the new entity by the founding fathers at a time when it comprised only part of half of the continent was regarded by some not merely as visionary, but as bordering on the arrogant. As seen from Brussels, the countries of the Mediterranean were neighbours and significant trading partners, and some as future members. Mutual interests should therefore be fostered. This was to be achieved by means of a series of individual Association Agreements, each of which took account of the special circumstances of the Mediterranean partner.

The Association Agreement between the European Economic Community and Greece had been signed in July 1961 and had come into operation in November of that year. This was not simply a trading arrangement, important though this aspect was. More important were those elements which explicitly aimed at paving the way for eventual full membership of the Community. To this end the Association Agreement set out a whole series of measures which were to be adopted in order to ensure the progressive integration of Greece into the entire fabric of life in the Community. Full membership of the Community was also the stated objective of the Association Agreement the Community had concluded with Turkey.

Sadly, events in Greece in April 1967 obliged the Community to suspend the Association Agreement. Only the specific obligations relating to routine matters continued to be honoured. The end of military rule and the restoration of a democratic system in July 1974 enabled the Community to resume operation of the Agreement and, on 12 June 1975, Greece formally applied to join the Community as a full member.

The Council of Ministers of the Community had its first opportunity to discuss the Greek application when it met on 24 June. On the following day, Dr Garret FitzGerald, the foreign minister of Ireland and at that time President of the Council, told the Greek delegation that the application would be more fully discussed by the Council in September and that, meanwhile, as required by the laws of the Community, the Commission had been invited to give its Opinion. Dr FitzGerald explained that the average time for consideration of applications for full membership was three years.

This was the situation when I arrived in Brussels in the autumn of 1975. I found that reactions to the Greek application were mixed. The

British government and the Danes were instinctively in favour of the enlargement of the Community. Apart from this, British military intervention during and after the Second War in efforts, one unsuccessful the other successful at least for a time, which reflected long-standing admiration for the people of Greece, disposed the British to favour moves to bolster democracy in that troubled country. For various reasons other member states were somewhat daunted by the prospect of absorbing Greece; their own economic interests would be directly affected. The predominance in the Greek economy of agriculture and the relatively weak industrial base would necessitate structural changes. Apart from the fact that progress towards agricultural harmonisation before the suspension of the Association Agreement had been limited, it was appreciated that the cost of the changes required would be a charge on the Community's finances. The increase in expenditure could amount to some 6% of the budget of the existing Community of the Nine. One of my colleagues —the representative of one of the original Six— who was noted for his sometimes caustic wit, suggested over one of our weekly informal lunches that, while we should certainly sing "God Save Greece" we might also sing "God Save Our Community".

Although the proceedings behind the closed doors of the Commission were normally treated with discretion, my colleagues and I learned that the drafting of the Commission's Opinion raised severe problems and that there was even a possibility that the Commission might recommend rejection of the application at least for the time being —and this despite the explicit aim of full membership set out in the Association Agreement.

Apart from the economic considerations there were important political implications. In the first place, disagreements between Greece and Turkey, its neighbour, fellow Associate and potential member of the Community, faced the Community with an unprecedented difficulty. Neither the Community itself nor any of the existing members states was willing to take sides in these disputes. At the same time, it was only realistic to acknowledge that the Community's ability to oblige the two countries to resolve their disputes themselves was limited. In any event, it would be important to assure the Turks that the accession of Greece would not affect the rights they enjoyed under their Association Agreement.

On 28 January 1976 the Commission, having completed its work, submitted its Opinion to the Council of Ministers. In recommending that the Community give "a clear positive answer to the Greek request" for membership in the light of the avowed aim of the Association Agreement and Greece's return to a democratic form of government, the Commission also suggested how the problems raised might be addressed. The Commission expressed the view that time should be allowed, even before the beginning of the normal transitional arrangements came into effect, to enable Greece to accelerate the necessary structural reforms and to develop a closer working relationship with the institutions of the Community. The Commission also recommended that the existing member states should take steps to advance the process of internal development of the Community in the period leading up to enlargement.

On 9 February 1976 the Council of Ministers, after considering the Commission's Opinion, announced that it was in favour of the Greek request for accession and would arrange for talks to "take place as soon as possible in a positive spirit" in order to establish a common basis for negotiation. It had instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to prepare its discussions to this end with the assistance of the Commission. However, the Council did not accept the Commission's proposal for a preparatory period before accession. It considered that, as in previous cases, there should be a transitional period after Greece's accession. Questioned by the perspicacious and ever enthusiastic press corps after the meeting, Gaston Thorn, the foreign minister of Luxembourg who had taken the chair, stressed that no political conditions had been attached to Greek membership. "The application would be judged on its merits", he said. He went on to emphasise that it would be wrong to link Greek membership with the dispute over Cyprus.

None of the ministers attending the meeting was insensitive to the problems posed by the Greek application. The British foreign secretary, James Callaghan, disclosed that one of the main reasons for rejecting the Commission's suggestion of a preliminary waiting period before the transitional arrangements came into force was the unfavourable reaction this would provoke in Athens; it was of political importance that the Community should show solidarity with the new democratic government in Greece.

While the news of the Community's acceptance of the Greek application was predictably one of dismay in Ankara, it was greeted with satisfaction in Athens. For Greece the Community represented a source of much needed capital, an incentive to foreign investors, access on privileged terms to a large market and a stimulus to the social policies the new democratic government favoured. The task now was to translate these aspirations into reality.

The events of 9 February 1976 initiated a period of detailed negotiation of the elements which would eventually constitute the provisions of the treaty of accession. At regular intervals over the following years reports were presented to the Council of Ministers about the progress of the negotiations and its members had time to contemplate the implications of the forthcoming enlargement of the Community. The Community of Nine, soon to become Ten, would become the Community of Twelve when, in due course, negotiations with the Spaniards and the Portuguese who had applied for membership in 1978, had also been concluded. Reaction to these two further applications had been similar to the attitude at the early stages towards the Greek application. Public opinion in Germany was reported to be nervous about a possible influx of cheap labour, and, while Italy and France saw further erosion of their advantageous position in agriculture, the integrationists feared yet more dilution of the Community spirit.

The anxieties of the German public were not shared by Chancellor Schmidt. In a conversation with Roy Jenkins, the President of the Commission, in November 1977 he demonstrated "remarkable enthusiasm for enlargement". He regarded it as a central duty of the Community to assist Greece, Spain and Portugal. A month later, addressing a meeting of the Council of Ministers in Brussels, Papaligouras, the Greek foreign minister voiced his discontent about the state of the negotiations. The Community's informal response was a commitment to break the back of the negotiations by the end of 1978. Although the term "breaking the back" in Community parlance meant settlement of the main issues without necessarily tidying up all the less important details, this was a bold undertaking. But it did not prevent Papaligouras from once again expressing his exasperation in even more dramatic terms when he confronted the Council of Ministers in April 1978.

By the early autumn of 1978 substantial progress had been made. The credit for this was due in large measure to the Greek prime minister, Konstantinos Karamanlis. For twenty years he had devoted himself to what he called Greek Europeanism. He understood the difficulty of integrating Greek agriculture into the Community system and appreciated that, if the Greeks were to demand either a short or even no transitional period at all, this could provoke the Italians and the French into proposing an even longer period than was then contemplated. A reasonable timetable began to emerge. The back of the negotiations would be broken by Christmas 1978. The process of drafting the necessary agreements would then begin and would be completed in time for signature in the summer of 1979.

Two surprises were in store. The crucial negotiating sessions took place during the German presidency of the Council, Hans-Dietrich Genscher being the principal Community negotiator. At the meeting in Brussels in the days immediately before Christmas 1978, the few remaining points of disagreement, notably agriculture and the length of the transitional period, were addressed in turn. When the Council had considered or reconsidered its position on a particular issue, Genscher would leave the Chamber to convey this to the Greek delegation led by the new foreign minister, Rallis, in an adjoining room. In due course he would return to the Chamber to report the Greek response. He took full advantage of his privileged position as president of the Council. He pressed his colleagues to reduce their demands but refused to adopt a more lenient attitude to the right of Greek families to work in the Community. Members of the Council expected to resume their meeting at 2.45 in the morning of 21 December to discuss two more requests by the Greeks on the subject of Community aid for the production of cotton and sugar and were surprised when Genscher returned to the chamber accompanied by the Greek delegation to announce that agreement had been reached, especially on agriculture. Although the concessions made were minor, Genscher had exceeded his brief. I admired the way in which his colleagues contained their resentment. When news of the agreement reached Athens, Karamanlis welcomed the outcome as the "starting point for better and more secure life for the Greek people". From the point of view of the British delegation the sentiment he expressed was satisfaction enough.

France assumed the presidency of the Council in January 1979. When the French foreign minister, Jean François-Poncet, chaired the final working session of the negotiations in April 1979, he in his turn sprang a surprise. It had been the custom that new entrants would sign their treaty of accession at the headquarters of the Community in Brussels. François-Poncet announced without warning that his president, Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, had agreed with the Greek government that the signature of this treaty would take place in Athens on 28 May 1979. A member of the French representation, as surprised as everyone else by this disregard of precedent, suggested *sotto voce* that his president believed that the mantle of Greek civilisation had fallen on his shoulders.

I was privileged to be among those, alongside the new British foreign secretary, Lord Carrington, who signed this treaty in the splendid modern rotunda between the Parliament and the Acropolis. President Giscard was present but did not speak. He sat somewhat apart from the other representatives looking, in Roy Jenkins' words, "like the mother of the bride". The final event was a brilliant reception in the garden of the Old Royal Palace hosted by President Tsatsos. But the day and the glory belonged to Konstantinos Karamanlis.

The Intervening Years

It is for each member state to determine whether it has taken full advantage of its membership of the European Community, now the Union. For nearly two decades the attitude of the British government towards Europe was at best unenthusiastic and at worst positively obstructive. Who will forget the absurd "beef war" of 1997? This has not served the national interest. If there are reservations or hesitations in Greece, then these are understandable. Greece has several serious preoccupations. The antagonism of the neighbour to the east persists. Not all the former members of the Soviet bloc are finding it easy to adjust to their new status. An end to the crisis in former Yugoslavia seems as remote as ever. And to the south Cyprus continues to fester. However, the people of Greece should take comfort from the prospect of important developments in the coming years which could enhance their role in the Union.

In his monumental "Life of Reason", the American philosopher,

George Santayana wrote: "Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness ... Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it". The history of our continent in this wonderful and dreadful century is littered with examples of this truth. In the process of European integration since the Second World War, serious mistakes have been made. First, the British were wrong to stand aside in the 1950s. Secondly, President de Gaulle was wrong in 1963 to veto the accession of the United Kingdom to the Community. Then, in 1991, European leaders were wrong to conclude a treaty at Maastricht which went far beyond what public opinion as a whole was ready at that time to accept. They had forgotten that the overriding objective of the great European enterprise has been "ever closer union among the *peoples* of Europe" —not simply among politicians, bankers, economists, intellectuals and bureaucrats.

Public reactions to the treaty demonstrated the extent of popular discontent, and obsession since then with the issue of the single currency has diverted attention from the concerns of the citizens. Across the continent many people feel, rightly or wrongly, that the European Commission interferes unnecessarily and trivially in their affairs. Some argue that the European Parliament has still not been accorded appropriate powers. Some want the proceedings of the Council of Ministers to be more transparent. Despite the benefits they have brought, certain policies—notably the common agricultural and common fisheries policies—are widely regarded as costly, unwieldy and unfair. Steps to ensure that European Union law is strictly observed are regarded as inadequate. Then again, in the fields of foreign policy and defence, it is clear to everyone that the efforts to coordinate the approach of member states need to be intensified. The decision to recognise the separate republics of former Yugoslavia in 1992 was a major political and diplomatic blunder. The Balkan tragedy was inevitably prolonged and it was a disgrace that, for the third time this century, a European war was ended only after American intervention. And, looking further afield at the plight of the deprived and tormented peoples of the developing world, Europe seems in recent years to have echoed Cain when he asked: "Am I my brother's keeper?" —and to have forgotten that his question was answered centuries later by the Samaritan on the road to Jericho.

Of no less importance are economic conditions within the Union. As

the weekly journal "The Economist" pointed out this spring, "Europe isn't working". This characteristically witty if sombre headline drew attention to the fact that, after the boom of the 1980s, a number of governments in continental Europe have been economically embattled. In France and Germany, for example, factory closures earlier this year provoked widespread demonstrations. Labour unrest was a major factor in the victory of the socialists in the recent elections in France. Unemployment in Germany has reached the highest level since the Second World War. This situation understandably cast a cloud over the fortieth anniversary in April last of the signature of the Treaty of Rome. In recent days economic prospects have begun to improve.

Over the past few years work on preparing what was intended to be the successor to the Maastricht Treaty went on out of public view. This culminated in the agreement reached at the Intergovernmental Conference in June of this year on the draft of the new treaty which was signed last month at Amsterdam.

When set against the ambitions of the European Commission and some member states, the Amsterdam treaty is a modest document, more notable, perhaps, for the omissions than the contents. The treaty does focus attention on the need to stimulate employment, to improve the way the single market functions, to protect the environment and to intensify cooperation in the fight against crime, traffic in drugs and corruption. In this respect the treaty goes some way towards recognising the concerns of citizens. It also allows negotiations for the further enlargement of the Union to begin and holds out a promise of more reform of the Union's institutions. However, other proposals, for example for combining defence forces, were not included.

A few months ago the European Commission submitted a document with the eye-catching title "Agenda 2000" to the Council of Ministers. This contains its proposals for the next enlargement of the Union to include five states in central and eastern Europe—the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia—, as well as Cyprus, bringing the number of members to twenty-one. The Commission also recommended additions and extensions to the reforms of the common agricultural policy introduced in 1992 by Commissioner McSharry; these appear to raise as many questions as they answer.

It is unlikely that the Treaty of Amsterdam or the Commission's "Agenda 2000" will persuade the citizens of the Union that their concerns are being addressed with the understanding and urgency they expect. If, in the early years of the new millennium, there is to emerge a European Union which will achieve the ambitions of its founders and command the respect and support of its citizens, then the next steps in the evolution of the Union will have to be handled with more imagination and vigour. The time is ripe not only for a shift in the Union's priorities but also for a stimulus to new, and even radical, thinking about Europe's destiny.

The Union of the Future

It is to be expected that those who labour day after day in this particular vineyard should find it difficult to see the state of the Union in a wider perspective. Let us stand back for a moment. Successful regional organisations thrive off their special characteristics. The most obvious characteristic of the European Union is its diversity —its different languages, races, faiths, cultures, histories and traditions. This is perhaps its greatest potential strength. Then there is the special relationship between the institutions of the Union and the unique evolutionary process enshrined in the phrase "ever closer union". This process is admired, even envied, in other regions of the world and the citizens of the Union should take pride in it. Instead many feel alienated from the step by step integration which they find opaque, complex and anonymous. In any event, in Marshal McLuhan's global village which we all inhabit today, the most relevant question is where ultimate authority resides.

Why should anyone suppose that existing systems of governance represent the limit of political evolution? Why assume that the architects of political systems from Pericles to Thomas Jefferson and Robespierre, from the English reformers of the nineteenth century to Karl Marx exhausted the constitutional possibilities? In today's interdependent, interconnected world fewer elements of sovereignty remain within national boundaries. In practice, sovereignty is divided horizontally into layers, beginning at global level and descending through regional and national level down to the parish.

If the Union continues on its present course, there is a risk that its

citizens will become increasingly alienated. This could lead to tension, even crisis in Europe. However, if the leaders of the Union were now to demonstrate not merely their determination to enlarge the Union but also their readiness to contemplate the decentralisation of power such an expansion will require, then they would go far to allay the anxieties of their peoples and respond to their desires. At the same time they would ensure that the authority of the Union would be exerted only where and when this was necessary and that the sense of national and regional identity would be both preserved and honoured. Apart from this, Europe's standing in the world would be enhanced if it could devise an original system for ordering relations between peoples of different cultures, traditions and faiths relevant to the circumstances of the new millennium.

Were the leaders of the Union to adopt such a programme, the prospects for our continent would be transformed. As early as possible the Union should embrace those countries of central and eastern Europe which qualify for membership and are prepared to accept the obligations this entails. The proceedings of the Council of Ministers should be opened up to the extent that this is consistent with good governance. The principle of subsidiarity should be applied rigorously to the functions of all of the Union's institutions. This would require, among other things, a restructuring of the European Commission and a review of its responsibilities. The powers of the Parliament should be further enhanced. The observance of Union law should be more strictly audited and the fraud and errors which amount to more than 5% of the Union's budget should be rooted out. The progress made by member states in improving coordination in the fields of foreign policy and defence should be consolidated. If it is to command respect and wield influence in international affairs, Europe must avoid another Yugoslavia.

The two thousandth anniversary of the dawn of the Christian era which we will soon be celebrating should be the occasion for a reassessment of attitudes and ambitions, not only about ourselves as individuals but also about our place in society and the role of our countries and the Union in the international community.

In preparation for that day Europe's political leaders would do well to look beyond the agenda they have set themselves. Public opinion which, as history has shown, is not always mistaken, will remind them

that Europe is more than simply a single market place. Europe is inhabited by peoples who, over the centuries and in different ways, have created one of the great civilisations. The contribution of Greece has been immense. The European Union should draw on this inestimable dowry. Through this and the concept of European citizenship, a new society can be created in our continent based on mutual trust and respect rather than the enmities which have caused so much pain in the past and which persist to this day.

Such a programme of reform would call for patience, determination and leadership. The citizens of the Union would be encouraged if the aims of the European venture were re-defined in terms appropriate to an enlarged Union in the global village. If it were proposed that, in the new circumstances, the objectives of the Union should be, first and foremost, to seek peace, stability, prosperity and social justice for all its citizens and, secondly, to play an effective role in the world in the interests of the peoples of Europe and humanity as a whole, then citizens of the Union would feel that their concerns and their aspirations were truly recognised. And that would be enough—for the time being.