

Greece turns left

with Karamanlis by now President of the Republic, the "New Democracy" plagued by seven years of fatigue (and suspicions of recent corruption, dried-up inspiration on means to revitalize a stagnant economy, and lack of moral purpose) Papandreu won the 1981 elections by a landslide.

Whatever might be said about Pasok's electoral promises, its politics were essentially populist: primarily negative (anti-Right, anti-West, anti- "Dependence"), its banner of *Alaghi* (Change) attracted an assortment of confused and skeptical voters. On the eve of these elections, 20 percent of the Greeks were stubbornly undecided and it seems certain that their bulk belonged to the old (liberal) Centre. But Papandreu's pre-election ambiguity helped to temper their fears that Pasok was still radical or potentially adventurist. With the Right now at 35 percent, the Communists at their traditional 11 percent, and the Centre all but extinct, Pasok embarked enthusiastically on ruling Greece.

First six months

On the domestic front, the first six months seemed like an exercise in problem recognition, not an application of solutions. Confusion and blunders (such as contradictory statements at the highest levels on property taxes) were attributed to the inexperience and lack of brilliance of the new administrators. But the government's new labor law, clearly biased on the side of labor, and its substantial increases of salaries and wages, suggested that Pasok would not betray the expectations of its working class constituency. It also suggested that the inherited inflation rate of 25 percent would be hard to combat. Higher direct and indirect taxation was aimed at democratizing burdens but threatened to alienate those who had assumed that better (consumerist) days were here at last. Noteworthy was the legalization of civil marriage, which caused serious friction with the Greek Orthodox Church, since this undermined its hold on the state (marriages until now had to be blessed by the priests, else they were void). A new law on higher education, essentially prepared by the previous government, abolished entrance examinations for the universities, replaced the "chair-system" of a single professorial overlord, and secured liberal student participation in decision-making.

Papandreu's focus, however, rested on international relations. An aggressive policy was launched in the forums of NATO and the EEC. Aiming at fulfilling the pledge to revise the country's perceived dependence on the West and to establish "national dignity," Pasok began vetoing most decisions in these forums, including the European sanctions against Jaruzelski's Poland and the Spanish entry into EEC. Combining substance with drama, Papandreu dismissed his deputy foreign minister by telephone for signing a Common Market document asserting Soviet responsibility for the Polish crackdown. An invitation to Libya's Gaddafi and the establishment of a PLO diplomatic mission in Athens underlined Pasok's pro-Third World affiliations, as did Papandreu's refusal to receive Alexander Haig because of a prior engagement with Yasser Arafat. The government insisted on explicit NATO guarantees of the Greek borders against any Turkish threat. It intimated that if, as the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 had shown, the Alliance could not safeguard vital Greek interests, Greece's participation in NATO would be counter-productive, if not self-contradictory.

In sum, the first six months of socialist rule produced modest measures domestically, a far cry from initially radical "change." Pasok's foreign stance, however, paralleled pre-election intimations but seemed to irritate and confuse Greece's western friends, without benefits for other (such as Arab) quarters.

Second six months

In the second six months, the domestic picture saw profound changes. Predicated on more private investment incentives and hopes for more public spending, Pasok's proposals on Greek stagflation seemed unoriginal and ineffectual. But Pasok avoided confrontations with any productive sector, opting for realism and compromise. For instance, last summer's strike by wholesale distributors of agricultural products who were insisting on a 12 percent rate of profit, led some imaginative observers to expect a revolt of Greek housewives reminiscent of what preceded Allende's downfall. Instead, distributors and government settled for 6 percent profit, and the threat of employing the army in the circulation of farm products did not materialize. Although it was transpiring that investors' confidence was still lacking and the shipping industry was in crisis, tourism, one of Greece's major industries, remained vibrant. The government attracted notoriety by recognizing the Greek Resistance against Nazism, a recognition previously resisted because of the communist uprising which had followed. It also began taking measures to rationalize agricultural cooperatives. And it is studying the creation of comprehensive medical care, lamentably lacking in Greece, the formation of a state-run system of pharmaceutical distribution, and a requirement for doctors to begin by serving in small provincial hospitals.

Most important in the second six months was the socialists' change of course in international relations. Without minimizing the pro-Arab stance, the confrontational posture in NATO and the Common Market was abandoned, with no further vetoes issued. By agreement with Turkey, a moratorium on "mutual provocations" was enforced last August, resulting in a temporary improvement in the climate. Gaddafi's visit did not take place, but Haig's did. And the talk of leaving the Western Alliance and the EEC was replaced by eloquent gestures signaling a decision to remain in both.

Papandreu's personal popularity exceeded 60 percent last summer. In addition, it now appeared as though Greece's more imaginative foreign policy had enforced Papandreu's claims to European statesmanship and the country's aspirations to quasi-autonomy. Moreover, the government was discovering a new profit from the Common Market budget: \$140 million in 1981 and \$800 million in 1982. Finally, there was some effort to raise the quality of Greek life through cultural and environmental initiatives, including pollution controls in industry, experimenting with a ban on private cars from the centre of Athens, decentralizing cultural amenities and civilizing Greek television programming.

If this picture, then, cannot amount to a failure of policy, what caused the decline in support revealed in last October's municipal elections? The answer begins to be seen by recognizing the distance between the results achieved and the expectations cultivated by Pasok itself. The "movement" had persuaded many Greeks that it possessed untried formulas for the Good Society, predicated