

Papandreou's Dilemmas

by Constantine Melakopides

Greek Socialism was catapulted to power in October 1981, when Andreas Papandreou and the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok) received 48 percent of the popular vote. But with their precise intentions all but inscrutable, curiosity about their domestic policies meshed with concern about the coherence of NATO's southern flank and the prospects for an expanding European Economic Community. Compared with Pasok's unequivocal anti-West theses in the electoral platforms of 1974 and 1977, its 1981 designs were premised on sustained ambiguity. The promised severing of ties with the Western alliance, withdrawal from the Common Market and the removal of American bases from Greek soil were now subjected to "transition periods" and serious qualifications. The confident enunciation of "socializing" the economy as part of "the building of socialism" lacked any definition, while the party's alternatives on security and defence bordered on calculated evasion.

With a year of his government now complete, it is safe to say that Papandreou's policies, especially in recent months, have been marked by impressive moderation and responsible caution. However, instead of solidifying its credibility and expanding its popular base, his party, despite its alliance with the Greek Eurocommunists, was considerably eroded in the politicized local elections of October 1982. For in the first round of these elections, the swing away from Pasok was between 8 and 15 percent in the major cities of Athens, Piraeus, Patras and Salonika, where nearly half the Greek population resides. Since the principal beneficiary of this erosion was the Moscow-linked Communist Party of Greece (KKE), the probability arises of their assuming a decisive role even before the next general elections.

Would Papandreou be forced (or inclined) to a future collaboration with the KKE? Is he capable of preventing the Communist Party's holding the balance of power in an inconclusive general election? And if not, could Greek politics enter another adventurous phase, so soon after the 1974 restoration of democracy? The reply hinges, I think, on appreciating Papandreou's dilemmas. But to understand their dynamics we need some assessment of his first year in power, after some remarks on Pasok's emergence and ideological identity.

Pasok's rise

Pasok was born in 1974 to fight in Greece's first post-dictatorship elections. It had its roots in Papandreou's Toronto-based PAK, a "liberation movement" that envi-

sioned armed insurrection against the junta and the Greek establishment, passionately convinced that the latter sustained the former under the delighted tolerance of the United States. Pasok itself was Papandreou's brainchild, drawing on his prestige as distinguished economist and charismatic politician. But his entourage consisted primarily of a few politicians, many well-meaning but mediocre adolescents and a few utopian intellectuals at the extreme left of the ideological spectrum. Unclear or evasive on concrete proposals, Pasok's 1974 profile proudly exhibited Marxist-Leninist tenets. It did not compromise on ambitions of pure Greek sovereignty, hatred for the multinationals, and unbounded admiration for Libya, Maoist China, Cuba, Cambodia and Third World liberation struggles. The party received 13.6 percent of the vote in the 1974 elections.

Fears of new tanks in the streets and respect for Constantine Karamanlis (whose "New Democracy" received 54.4 percent) should also account for Pasok's modest showing. Intense organization, the suppression of its hysterical fringes and the gradual absorption of the left wing of the old Centre, allowed Papandreou to double his following (25.3 percent) in 1977. It was New Left rhetoric that now defined Pasok's tone and affected its emergent principles: national sovereignty, decentralization, socialization, dissociation from the West, including from NATO and from the EEC.

The transformation for the 1981 elections capitalized on the ambiguity already mentioned. For instance, in 1974 Pasok had urged explicitly: "All bilateral agreements that have allowed the Pentagon to convert Greece into a springboard for its expansionist policy must be abolished." In 1981 the party's statement on the American bases "recognizes that there will most probably be, within the procedures for the removal of the bases, a transition period." While Pasok's opposition to EEC membership had been vehement for seven years, a referendum was now proposed on this issue — although it was common knowledge that the relevant prerogative rests with the President, who was the architect and staunch supporter of Greece's becoming the tenth member of the Common Market. And even though a cold shoulder was given to NATO, if only for its inability to prevent the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, no time constraints were set on Greece's withdrawal from the Alliance. Thus,

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