

GRS 697

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Greece

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FM ATHENS 191045Z OCT 81

TO IMMEDIATE FCO DESKBY 191200Z OCT 81
TEL NO 261 OF 19 OCT 81

RPTD IMMEDIATE INFO TO UKREP BRUSSELS, UKDEL NATO, WASHINGTON
NICOSIA, ANKARA

PRIORITY INFO PARIS, BONN, ROME

ROUTINE INFO OTHER NATO POSTS, UKMIS NEW YORK, DUBLIN,

MADRID

AND MOSCOW.

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MY TEL 259 : THE GREEK ELECTIONS

1. THE RESULT OF THE NATIONAL ELECTION IS A TRIUMPH FOR ANDREAS PAPANDEOU AND A DISASTER FOR NEW DEMOCRACY. PASOK WILL HAVE A COMFORTABLE WORKING MAJORITY IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT. PAPANDEOU HAS SUCCEEDED IN REDUCING THE CONSERVATIVE NEW DEMOCRACY TO ITS BEDROCK SUPPORT OF JUST OVER 35% OF THE ELECTORATE, AT THE SAME TIME HOLDING DOWN THE COMMUNIST KKE TO AROUND 11%, ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE THAN ITS STRENGTH IN THE PREVIOUS PARLIAMENT.
2. THE RESULTS SHOW THAT THE PLARISATION IN GREEK POLITICS TO WHICH I DREW ATTENTION IN MY TELEGRAM NO 252 WAS SHARPER THAN EXPECTED. THE SMALL PARTIES OF THE CENTRE, EUROCOMMUNIST LEFT AND EXTREME RIGHT, HAVE BEEN VIRTUALLY WIPED OUT. THEY WILL HAVE NO SEAT IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT.
3. ANALYSIS OF THE CONSTITUENCY RESULTS SUGGESTS THAT THE NEW DEMOCRACY PICKED UP THE MAJORITY OF THE VOTES FROM THE FAR RIGHT THAT WENT IN 1977 TO THE ROYALIST NATINAL RALLY. BUT PASOK SUCCEEDED IN WINNING NOT ONLY THE LION'S SHARE OF THE VOTES FROM THE OLD VENIZELIST AND LIBERAL CENTRE BUT ALSO OF A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER—PERHAPS 10% — OF DISGRUNTLED VOTES FROM NEW DEMOCRACY. PASOK WON THE CRUCIAL BATTLE FOR THE GROUND IN THE CENTRE AND CENTRE-RIGHT. THE PARTY'S MOST STRIKING WINS ARE IN CRETE WHERE THEY HAVE TAKEN 13 SEATS TO NEW DEMOCRACY'S 4. OVER THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE, THE PASOK VOTE WAS FAIRLY EVENLY SPREAD OVER URBAN AND AGRICULTURAL AREAS. NEW DEMOCRACY HAS DONE RATHER BETTER IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE THAN IN THE TOWNS :FOR THE KKE(EXTERNAL) THE REVERSE.

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4. PASOK OWES ITS VICTORY, I BELIEVE, TO THE WIDESPREAD APPEAL OF PAPANDEOU'S PROMISE OF CHANGE IN PEOPLE AND POLICIES, BACKED BY HIS OWN PERSONALITY AND AN EFFECTIVE PARTY ORGANISATION THAT HAS WORKED SYSTEMATICALLY OVER A LONG PERIOD TO CULTIVATE GRASS -ROOTS OPINION AND, DURING THE CAMPAIGN, TO MOBILISE AND DISPLAY EFFECTIVELY ON TELEVISION THE ENTHUSIASM OF AN EMOTIONAL ELECTORATE. WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE COMMITTED TO PAPANDEOU'S STATED POLICIES, THE MAJORITY HAS CHOSEN THAT PARTY WHICH THEY PERCEIVE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF CHANGE. FEW VOTES WERE WASTED. NEW DEMOCRACY ALSO CONDUCTED AN INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN AND THEIR RALLIES WERE ALSO WELL ATTENDED, BUT RALLIS LAID COMPARITIVELY LITTLE EMPHASIS ON POLICIES FOR THE FUTURE. HIS TACTIC OF PRESENTING PAPANDEOU AS AN IRRESPONSIBLE BOGEYMAN DID NOT PAY OFF.

5. THE EXTENT OF PASOK'S VICTORY, BUT NOT THE VICTORY ITSELF, HAS TAKEN VIRTUALLY EVERYBODY INCLUDING PASOK POLITICIANS BY SURPRISE. PAPANDEOU'S REFERENCE IN THE STATEMENT REPORTED IN PARAGRAPH 3 OF MY T.U.R., TO MAKING CHANGE TANGIBLE, QUICKLY AND DIRECTLY, AND IMPLEMENTING HIS PROGRAMME TO THE LETTER CERTAINLY FORESHADOW EARLY MEASURES IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FIELDS. WHETHER THEY MEAN THAT PAPANDEOU WILL MOVE QUICKLY IN REDEFINING GREECE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EC AND NATO IS NOT YET CERTAIN, THOUGH THE REFERENCE AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE TO 'NEGOTIATION ~~AFTER~~ DISCUSSION' WITH THE COMMUNITY AND HIS HOPE TO MEET THE COMMISSIONERS DOES NOT SUGGEST HASTE.

6. ONE POSITIVE FEATURE OF THE RESULT IS THAT THE KKE, ARE LEFT ON THE SIDELINES. THEIR STRENGTH IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT WILL BE ONLY MARGINALLY INCREASED AND PAPANDEOU WILL HAVE NO NEED OF THEIR SUPPORT. I REGARD THE PRESENT RESULT AS IN THIS IMPORTANT RESPECT A BETTER ONE FOR GREECE, AND FOR WESTERN INTERESTS IN THE LONGER TERM THAN A HUNG ELECTION WITH PAPANDEOU TEMPTED TO RELY ON THE COMMUNISTS. THERE MAY BE SOME ADVANTAGE ALSO, FOR ALL THE PROBLEMS THAT A PASOK GOVERNMENT WILL POSE FOR THE ALLIANCE AND THE COMMUNITY IN HAVING A CLEAR-CUT RESULT, SO THAT THE ELECTORATE NEXT TIME CAN JUDGE PAPANDEOU ON HIS RECORD AND HE WILL HAVE NO-ONE TO BLAME IF THIS IS JUDGED WANTING.

7. INFORMATION HAS NOT YET BEEN RELEASED ABOUT THE RESULTS OF PREFERENTIAL VOTING, SO IT IS NOT KNOWN WHICH, IF ANY, MEMBERS OF THE FORMER NEW DEMOCRACY GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE LOST THEIR SEATS.

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8. THE RESULTS SO FAR AVAILABLE IN THE DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ARE, AS I EXPECTED, MORE FAVOURABLE TO THE PRO-EUROPEAN SMALL PARTIES KODESO(SOCIAL DEMOCRAT) AND KKE INTERIOR(EUROCOMMUNISTS) THAN THOSE OF THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS. THE ELECTION OF THE PARTY LEADRES PESMAZOGLOU (KODESO) AND KYROS(KKE INTERIOR) APPEAR TO BE ASSURED. A FAIR NUMBER OF THE ELECTORATE HAS TAKEN THE VIEW THAT IT MAKES SENSE TO BE REPRESENTED IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BY POLITICIANS WHO BELIEVE IN EUROPE. NEVERTHELESS, OF THE 24 SEATS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IT LOOKS AS IF MORE THAN HALF ARE GOING TO PARTIES WHICH OPPOSE GREECE'S MEMBERSHIP (10 TO PASOK AND 3 TO THE KKE).

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