

Oral History Interview

with

THEODORE CHRISTIDIS

Greek economist. Director of Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 1924-45; General Secretary, Ministry of National Economy, 1946; Counsellor, 1948-50, General Counsellor, 1950-53, and Deputy Head, 1953-55, of Greek Permanent Delegation to OEEC, Head of Delegation, 1956-71; concurrently Ambassador to European Economic Community, 1959-62.

Paris, France

July 6, 1970

by Theodore A. Wilson, University of Kansas

The Harry S. Truman Library
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WILSON: Would you recapitulate generally what were the effects of the aid programs in Greece in particular? What were the motives in your view of the United States in providing them?

CHRISTIDIS: This is a very general question; I would be very glad to answer it, but in a particular way.

WILSON: Yes.

CHRISTIDIS: Immediately after the end of the war the whole of Europe was in ruins and communism was invading all the Western World. That is a

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fact that nobody can argue.

In Greece we had sustained two invasions and we were facing at that moment a third one. The two invasions were the Fascist, and the Nazi.

The first, the Fascist invasion, we dealt with successfully and gave to humanity the first joy of a victory in the bleak years of the 1940s. Concerning the second, naturally, it was impossible for a country of nine million inhabitants to face two powerful Fascist and Nazi empires. So, we fell. We fell completely in ruins, for we fought from our borders up to the stopping point of Greece, which was Crete. The Battle of Crete we lost in 20 days, which gave the time for the greatest ally of Russia to come into play, that is, winter and snow. If we didn't delay the rush of the Nazis to clear out that thorn on their back, Greece, then the ally of the Russians would not have been able to intervene in front of Moscow, exactly at Mosaïsk, and stop the German invasion. That was the stopping point of the disaster which crushed the Nazis later.

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When we were liberated, after peace was signed, the world war continued for Greece, for we had to face the third invasion, which was as bleak, as strong, as hard, and as ruthless as the previous two. That was the Communist invasion. We had again to fight and again we won. When we at last crushed it, there was another factor. Everybody in this world has forgotten that when the Communists were withdrawing from Greece, they kidnapped 28 thousand children. Since then they have disappeared from their families, from their villages, from their religion, from their country; and nobody knows where they are, or rather, we know where they were -- they are in Tashkent where they became what we used to call in the Byzantine times, the Yenitsars. They were Greek children, kidnapped by the Turks, made Moslems from their early age and were thus the most frantic opposers of the Greeks. Nobody in this world ever thought of raising his voice to inquire, "Where are those 28 thousand children?"

When we fell in ruins, after this big disaster,

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if we had been able to stand on our feet, to rebuild our country, to reconstruct our roads, our bridges, our homes, our factories, and to rebuild our industries, we owe all this to the vitality of the Greek people. Yet vitality by itself could do nothing without the material element that came from the United States. It was a phenomenon in the history of the world, of the United States of America, which after sending its sons, fathers, and brothers, to fight from one end of Europe up to Berlin and further, to come once more and give the great aid which was known as the Marshall plan aid and the Truman dogma.

This was a phenomenon which very few people could understand and very few people have managed to keep in their minds and have the necessary moral sentiment of gratitude. I express

today the gratitude of the Greek people for the American aid and to the memory of General Marshall and to Harry Truman.

WILSON: Thank you.

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CHRISTIDIS: Greece obtained a fairly good share of this aid, and thanks to that share we survived. As I told you previously, we have been able to reestablish ourselves and work within this society.

WILSON: What responsibilities did you hold in this period?

CHRISTIDIS: In that period I was a counselor of this delegation, and I participated in the sharing of the Marshall plan aid, the direct and indirect aid. As you may recall, there was another fact which was an enormous proof of the greatness of the historical role of the United States.

Aid was divided into direct and indirect forms, What was the difference between these two types of aid? The direct aid was given in dollars by the United States, and broken down into shares for each industrial and non-industrial country. The share of direct aid given to the industrial countries was much greater. The principle was this: Europeans, who have

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traditionally been industrial countries, will get a bigger share in order to reestablish, reconstruct and modernize their industries, set the people to work, give work to the labor population, and then take the responsibility to give indirect aid to the developing member countries. The United States gave to the Europeans money to work, and in return they (the Europeans) gave products under the form of indirect aid to the underdeveloped European countries. Direct aid, known as contributions in dollars, was convertible and with which one could buy everything from wherever one liked. Yet, there again was another gesture of the United States. In Greece whenever we wanted to buy goods with that direct aid, which were cheaper in the United States, the administration used to tell us, "No, don't buy rice from us though it is cheaper; buy it from Italy so that you may indirectly help Italy to survive and to reorganize itself. We will pay you the difference. Don't buy it from us, buy it from Italy." That happened in the case of

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rice and sulphur. Sulphur, as you know, was absolutely necessary for the maintenance of our vineyards.

That was another phenomenon of the mentality, of the high moral spirit of the United States during the immediate postwar period. Then there was the indirect aid. The United States gave more aid to France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the industrialized countries under the condition that they would give to developing member countries indirect aid, known as drawing rights. That was the terminology used.

What were these drawing rights? I handled that question for Greece. We had to establish for instance, hypothetical balances of payment with each of our partners, France, England and so on.

We found out what would have been the intra-European deficit, or the bilateral deficit if you prefer, for each of these hypothetical balances of payments. Then we started bargaining and every country gave us what was called drawing rights,

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that is to say, a credit margin of five million, seven million, 20 million, etc., dollars on which we drew under the obligation to buy certain industrial products produced by these countries, through the direct aid given by the United States of America. This was a simple mechanism established by the United States representatives in Paris with the aid of the European economist, Ansiau, then Governor of the Bank of Belgium. At that time he was the chairman of the Joint Trade and Payments Committee of the then OEEC. That's how it worked.

WILSON: A remarkably successful mechanism, wasn't it?

CHRISTIDIS: It was a remarkably successful mechanism, and quite different from what had happened after the First World War, when the United States closed the doors, obliged the Europeans to pay back all their debts, put on custom duty barriers, and quantitative barriers. The result was the great crisis which occurred.

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WILSON: Some people in Europe have said that they wished that this system of drawing rights still existed, for they think it would work better today than the so-called convertibility system which was developed in 1958.

CHRISTIDIS: I don't think that that is true. The system of drawing rights was effective and very realistic at that time when bilateralism was in full action, but it fell as soon as we set up, within the OEEC, the first payments agreement, which was followed by the European Payments Agreement and by the European monetary agreement of today. From a very small venture, we started with the first payments agreement, and we came to full convertibility of the European money, abandoning completely bilateralism. Bilateralism is the enemy of progress and of economic development. The result is that you block balances, either active or passive, with as a result that at a certain moment the whole movement breaks. I remember during the period of 1932-40, Greece had bilateral agreements

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with all the European countries. At that time the general rule was bilateralism.

What happened was this: Germany, by that time, was buying all kinds of goods from Greece in order to constitute an enormous active balance. The result was that when we wanted to buy wheat, for instance, to feed our people, we had to pay in cash, in dollars, and in sterling, for Germany had no wheat. We had German marks which we could not use to buy indispensable foodstuffs and raw materials, and we had to buy all sorts of useless things from the Germans to cover the balance. On the other side, we had enormous debit balances with France with as a result at a certain moment the French had to close us the doors and stop exporting to Greece. I am talking about Greece, but bilateralism was then a general phenomenon all over the world.

Now, bilateralism is dead. Some people are trying to have it survive for there are other interests, which are combined with bilateralism.

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WILSON: Am I correct in saying that the United States took the position for multilateralism from the beginning?

CHRISTIDIS: Yes.

WILSON: It stood very strongly in favor of the kinds of policies which were set up by the European Payments Union and which ultimately ended in convertibility.

CHRISTIDIS: Exactly. You have people like Havlik here, like the Ambassador of the United States now in Athens, Harry Tasca, and so many others, like Mr. Harriman, who was here at the head of your delegation. They worked with all their heart to push Europe toward multilateralism and liberalization of visible and invisible transactions, that is to say, trade and invisibles.

WILSON: Since you've raised this fascinating issue of multilateralism versus bilateralism, one of the holdovers for a time of bilateral arrangements was that of the joint export-import agency in Germany,

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controlled by the military authorities of the United States, Great Britain and France. Did that cause difficulties in the period? That was considerable German reliance for a time on imported Greek tobacco for example.

CHRISTIDIS: That's right. We had great troubles at the beginning. We faced great troubles for reviving our tobacco exports in Western Germany, or rather as it was called then, the "Bizone."

WILSON: Yes, that is correct.

CHRISTIDIS: Germany was not united into one federation, but there were three zones, and within the OEEC there were three delegations. I forget what you called that institution you had in Germany; it was a particular name, export-import.

WILSON: Joint Export-Import Agency. The OMGUS was the American Military Government.

CHRISTIDIS: We always faced great difficulties, because the Joint Export-Import Agency tried to push forward

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American tobacco in order to change the smoking taste of the people. But by abandoning bilateralism and by coming back to a multilateral trade we have regained our tobacco market in Germany, not detrimentally to the exports of American tobacco, for American tobacco is largely exported now in Germany. We recuperated our trade because the consumption of cigarettes and smoking in general has increased all over the world, so there is a place for everybody with some

good will. Yet, we lost the United Kingdom market, and since the end of the First World War, we have not been able to reintroduce ourselves into the United Kingdom tobacco market.

WILSON: They sold it to Virginia to buy tobacco there.

CHRISTIDIS: Yes.

WILSON: Do you recall anything of your reaction to President Truman's decision to extend aid to Greece, the Truman dogma, at the time the British recognized and informed the Greek Government, that

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they no longer could give satisfactory assistance? Was it a great surprise to you that the U.S. would step in so soon?

CHRISTIDIS: We always expected that that would come, and we are thankful to the high morality and to the good understanding of the American people. Particularly, when we heard about the Truman dogma, we breathed with some ease because we knew and we understood that the United Kingdom could not continue for obvious reasons to support our country in the state in which it was, and we could not possibly survive without aid. So Greek people were absolutely expecting this gesture, emanating from the Truman dogma and they had reason to do it because they believed in the high morality and in the magnanimity of the United States administration and the United States people. We are now very grateful to Harry Truman, and perhaps we are the only state that has set up a statue to a living personality. Generally you set up statues after death - - may God give him a long life. Yet, we did it, and we were the first, perhaps the only

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country erecting a statue in one of the centers of Athens as a gesture of gratitude to a man who was inspired with his dogma and who helped us to survive.

WILSON: I shall visit Athens soon and I look forward to seeing that. As you may know, there is a helmet from the time of Pericles, sent by the Greek people as a gift to the President, which has an honored place in the Truman Library; it's one of the most interesting exhibits in the Library in Independence.

CHRISTIDIS: I didn't know that.

WILSON: Yes, it's fascinating.

Did you come to the first organizational meetings of the OEEC?

CHRISTIDIS: Not exactly. I was called here in July 1948, and we had quite a big mission, with ministers and so on, who were trying to understand the questions of indirect and direct aid. They couldn't get it, because nobody had attended the

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first discussion of the Trade and Payments Committee. So when I arrived here I found myself between top personalities of Greece, who were trying to ask me, "What is it all about?"

I said, "I'm coming from Athens, I don't know anything about it."

So, I went to this Committee where the place for Greece was empty up to then. When I sat down President Ansiau welcomed me and said, "We are very happy to see that now our family is complete with the Greek representative," and pronounced some very nice words about my country. I thanked him. Naturally I could not understand a single word about what they were talking about. It was like Chinese for me, because I couldn't understand the formula and I was absolutely a stranger there.

So, at the end of the meeting I went to Ansiau and I said, "Well, I thank you for the good words you said, but could we have some dinner together?" He was very pleased. When we sat down I said, "Please explain to me what all these things mean." So, with patience and clarity he

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analyzed all the ideas which were in his head and in that of the United States delegation here.

So, the next morning, when I went to the Hotel Bristol where the Greek delegation was, they asked me, "Well, how did you get on with the exact meaning of drawing rights?"

So, thanks to Ansiau I was able to lecture them. They were all astonished and asked me, "Well, how did you find that out? Yesterday you didn't know anything about that; now you are lecturing us."

I said, "Here is how I got it. I was not inspired by the Holy Spirit during the night; it was Ansiau who gave me the full picture, and thanks to him I started negotiating." At the end I was also chairman of the Trade Committee and for some time I succeeded Ansiau as chairman of the Joint Trade and Payments Committee. So, I can say that if not from the beginning, I was here from the early days, and I know this history and you see I am talking and talking without having any papers in front of me to consult.

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WILSON: Yes, yes, I am fascinated. Can I conclude from what you are saying that there was a remarkable air of informality, that there was not very much consciousness of, "Here I am a member of the Greek delegation," "Here I am a Belgian," that there was a remarkable degree of cooperation?

CHRISTIDIS: There was a remarkable degree of cooperation and this led to the spirit of the convention. It was a very difficult convention, because it needed unanimity, but in such cases unanimity was indispensable for it led to formulas of compromise. Although formulas of compromise are never perfect, they lead to ideas and links of cooperation. We are still in the era of unanimity rule within the OECD and it succeeded within the OEEC. Thanks to that, we can discuss on an equal basis, and there is no possibility of

smaller ones being oppressed by stronger ones, which is a natural phenomenon. I don't blame anybody for doing that. Perhaps if we were strong we would have done the

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same thing. It's quite a natural phenomenon, but this rule of unanimity gives one a way out because it obliges all the countries, large and small, to find certain formulas that are acceptable by everybody.

WILSON: One of the principal themes that has come up in these interviews has been the British role, and the role of the United Kingdom in the OEEC. I've gotten various views as you might understand, but particularly here on the Continent, some people have said that the British did not participate fully and that they were not as eager about what was hoped for, as the other countries. Others have said that the United Kingdom did participate to a satisfactory degree, and that the OEEC had somewhat limited purposes, the purpose to accomplish basically European recovery and that in this the British participated fully. Of course, you have every right to review what you say.

CHRISTIDIS: I shall speak frankly. I don't think that the United Kingdom ever tried to evade from

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cooperation. Throughout all this period of nearly 21 years, naturally there were difficult questions which had to be negotiated very toughly, but I have never been able to detect a spirit of evasion from the United Kingdom, from a more deliberate and broader cooperation within Europe. In fact, this is when the Common Market, the EEC was established. The United Kingdom, under the presidency of Reginald Maulding, asked and pressed for a big committee with the participation of all countries to be set up within the then OEEC to try and bridge the gap created between the rest of Europe and the EEC, and set up a European free area. That failed, but it wasn't due to the reaction of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom did its best to leave to us a broader formula and because of the failure of that exercise, they set up a counterweight to OEEC. Naturally we were fortunate to associate ourselves with the European Economic Community, and it has been very good. Speaking absolutely frankly, I did not detect any reaction from the side of the United Kingdom, either in the old formula of the

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OEEC, or during the difficult negotiations by the preparatory committee for the establishment of the OECD.

WILSON: That's very interesting, very helpful. Some persons have said that from the beginning the United States and American representatives urged as strongly as they could that Europe and Europeans take every possible step for integration, and some said that the desire of the United States was to accomplish some European union. Others have said no, that was not really noticeable until 1949 when Administrator Hoffman made his famous speech about that. Would you comment on this?

CHRISTIDIS: In 1948-49, to try to set up a European union was rather optimistic because Europe was still in ruins, and life for European countries was limited in action and in economical activity. This phenomenon started appearing later. I understand that the United States were quite pro in that and it was launched by the ideas of Spaak, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, who afterwards was

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also Secretary General of the NATO here. He was in favor of a European political union, but he failed in those steps, and that led to a second step which was the meeting in Venice where they set up the guiding principles, which led to the treaty of Rome. That is to say, to the establishment of the EEC. So, I don't think that from the beginning American diplomacy was trying to impose a European union. It was impossible at that time. Nobody could fancy in 1948-49 what would happen with Germany because it was still divided in three zones. The northern part of Germany was federated, and united to one part of Western Germany, which set up its democratic structure. Could one talk about a political unification of Europe?

WILSON: Did you think at the time that perhaps the United States was giving too much emphasis to the role of a revived Germany in Europe?

CHRISTIDIS: I think we did, and quite wise it was. Of course, it built up a bastion without which God knows where we would have been today.

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WILSON: How much awareness did you have to have at the time of what was going on in the United States, particularly in the United States Congress with yearly appropriations?

CHRISTIDIS: That naturally kept us in a certain degree of anxiety.

WILSON: Yes.

CHRISTIDIS: What would be the appropriation? If it would be reduced, that would affect the whole family of us. The first year, the repetition of the direct aid was directly done by the United States administration through your delegation here. Then afterwards, the next year, they dropped it on our shoulders within the OEEC, which had to deal with it, and naturally with the approval of the United States. That was much more difficult to realize because everybody was trying to get a bigger part of the cake on the table and that was tiresome work.

WILSON: But it did succeed?

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CHRISTIDIS: It did succeed through cooperation and that comes to the initial part of your question. It's an indirect, positive answer to your question.

WILSON: It's a remarkable accomplishment. Perhaps in the United States we have not been sufficiently aware of the fact that this was successful, that this sort of cooperation could take

place with the revealing of information about national economies which had before been secret and before not been available. I think that's a remarkable evidence of success.

CHRISTIDIS: It was remarkable because that was the very first step, which led today to a big comprehension between Western-minded countries. Now, OECD is something much broader than it was at the initial stage, even of the OEEC. I don't speak about the OEEC; that was quite European, with associates -- the United States and Canada. In OECD now we have the United States and Canada as full members. We have Japan as a full member.

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Finland has joined also, and now the Australians are negotiating to come in. New Zealand also is participating in various activities of the OECD without being a full member. What is the idea behind that? We have been taught to abandon the "closed doors" policies of the past, either political or economic. We have learned to sit around the table with ministers of high standing, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with your people of the Treasury, all the senior ministers, in order to discuss the most hot points and problems, which we are all facing. We have learned to stop taking measures, which for a short time would be good individually for a country, but which would have direct impact on the economies of the other countries. We have learned how to cooperate and perhaps this is due to the first step which you have pressed us to take by abandoning the sharing of the cake to us, and throwing the responsibility on our shoulders. We learned to have responsible minds.

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WILSON: That's a very good statement.

CHRISTIDIS: And not individual minded, but collective minded.

WILSON: Getting Europe and getting Greece back on its feet economically, did you think that 20 years later you would be back in Paris as Ambassador to the OECD?

CHRISTIDIS: Certainly not.

WILSON: But so many of the people such as you who participated in that early activity have continued their connections. It's a very interesting phenomenon.

CHRISTIDIS: It is an interesting phenomenon. I have never stopped being here. It's an uninterrupted life during all this long period. I have two prominent colleagues, Nicholaidis and Komninos. Nicholaidis was my predecessor as head of the Greek delegation. Komninos was our economic advisor. He dealt with direct aid; I dealt with

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indirect aid, drawing rights.

Kominos is now Governor of the National Bank of Greece, and Nicholaidis is head of one of the biggest Greek industrial concerns in Athens, producing nickel and exporting big quantities of that; he gave an active impulse to that organization. I remained here and after 15 years I have the

rank of an Ambassador. I am coming to the end of my task now. I am growing too old and too tired.

WILSON: Yes, but I hope you have at some time a plan to describe, perhaps to write a memoir about your service.

CHRISTIDIS: That's what I am thinking of; when I retire I will start writing my memoirs.

WILSON: Yes, yes, that would be fascinating. May I ask two questions which are connected with this? One, were there difficulties in getting your government in Athens to recognize the necessary degree of cooperation which had occurred here? This has come up before, that perhaps what happened

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when people came to Paris is that they took, naturally, a broader view of the things which had to be done, than the governments at home.

CHRISTIDIS: That's quite a different question. Naturally at the beginning nobody knew what it was about in Greece. We were involved with the third invasion, which obliged us to sacrifice a great amount of the Marshall plan aid we received. Whereas the other countries were using that money to rebuild, to reconstruct, to rehabilitate themselves, we used it to defend ourselves and to go through the third invasion. That's why we delayed, and naturally the Greek Government, facing these two-fold problems, the third invasion and the economic reconstruction of the destruction which intervened meanwhile, could not spare much time to think about that. Whenever prime ministers came here, and saw what was happening, then it was evident that they caught the idea and understood it. As we have a developed political spirit due to our ancient origin, we have recorded it and

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have worked for it. I can say that though we were in difficulties, we were one of the first countries to liberalize trade in 1953, up to 90 percent, and since then, we are evolving in a principle of free trade.

WILSON: Being here in Paris, you dealt primarily with the American administration here, with Harriman's office and his staff. Did you also deal with the ECA country mission in Athens, or did you go through your government who then dealt with...

CHRISTIDIS: There was a link; the ECA, headed by various personalities, was established in Athens and gave the guidelines at the beginning. The ECA had set up a foreign trade administration within the then Ministry of National Economy, at the head of which was a very clever man named Terrel. I had direct contact with Chick Terrel, and with the people of the ECA in Athens, but naturally going through the Greek Government, and having so as to say a triangle of contacts, the Government, the ECA, the Greek delegation. Very often people of the ECA

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and of the Foreign Trade Administration came here and they developed a completely open-hearted and open-minded cooperation.

WILSON: That's very interesting. What about the other end of this? Some people have suggested to me that one of the difficulties that arose was that so many agencies of the United States Government had interests in what was going on in Europe, Treasury, Agriculture, Commerce, the ECA, the Department of State; and that they sometimes got in each other's way, and that you had to sort out these things. Was that somewhat complicated?

CHRISTIDIS: That's quite right. Very often; you hinted before the question of tobacco.

WILSON: Yes.

CHRISTIDIS: First, one side was trying to push us to reestablish our economy; by that time the main product we exported was tobacco.

WILSON: Yes.

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CHRISTIDIS: That was the backbone of our export trade, of our revenues in foreign exchange. Naturally, we had a very complicated situation, because your people of agriculture were trying from the other side to push American tobacco in Europe and push us out. We were pushed, and thank God, with great success, to replace part of our tobacco production and of our wheat production, which was anti-economical by that time, by cotton production. As soon as we became exporters of cotton again we found reactions from the outside. Well, one must find one's way through, for there are always conflicting interests in all parts of the world and in all parts of the society of human beings. There are grudges and grumbles and so on and so forth, but with good will and understanding and a fair mind one finds solutions.

WILSON: That's very good.

Of course, you were prepared to be tolerant, but I'm sure that part of it was that this was a new thing for the United States to do.

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CHRISTIDIS: For all the world.

WILSON: Yes. And so it was natural that perhaps the most efficient lines of communication would not be set up. It's fascinating in a way because it was so complex and yet it worked.

CHRISTIDIS: On this very point, from the very beginning we were trying to industrialize Greece. Fortunately during the last three years of peace in Greece, of order, of moral administration, we pushed it forward considerably. But this brings me back to '48-'49 when we got as indemnities from Germany a blast furnace. We tried to push that blast furnace to Greece in order to establish the first basis of a steel industry, a basic industry for industrialized countries.

We had a hell of a time, and at the end it was sold as scrap. Many interested firms tried to stop the transportation of a blast furnace in Greece; they succeeded, and it was sold as scrap.

That's a point where crushing interests appeared, and we have been delayed in our industrialization. Now, we are actually working on industrialization,

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and I can tell you some figures that are very characteristic. Our exports rose within this three years about 60 or 70 percent. They have reached about 600 million dollars. Up through 1966 industrial products represented only 10 percent of our export trade. Now, industrial products represent 35 percent...

WILSON: That's remarkable.

CHRISTIDIS: ...of export trade. This is remarkable under the meaning of a stable government and fair organization without red tape and without blackmailing.

WILSON: That is absolutely remarkable. I look forward to visiting Athens; I have never been in Greece.

CHRISTIDIS: You must visit Greece because that will help you to understand our philosophy, which is a pure democratic philosophy. Our democracy is based on a sound, moral, Platonian and Aristolelian basis. We are working for a real democracy. We are of the opinion that we gave birth to the

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philosophy of democracy through the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. But in ancient Greece also, democracy often started becoming demagogic, fading away, and we had to have various periods of transition. We are trying to rebuild democracy on its firm, sound, moral, philosophical basis. That's what we are always doing in Greece and I am sure you will go and you will see that we are real democrats.

WILSON: I look forward to that experience.

If I might just ask a final question: Since you were here during all of this time, what would you single out as being the principal events? Perhaps one of the first great statements dealt with Greece, the Truman dogma, and then Marshall's speech. How important was the Korean war as a transitional point in these aid programs, or had the emphasis toward rearmament away from recovery begun earlier with NATO?

CHRISTIDIS: Well, it's evident that we have a great burden for rearmament. Within the NATO countries

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we have nine million in population, and yet we have 12 divisions under arms.

WILSON: Yes.

CHRISTIDIS: Other countries, very rich, with a per capita revenue two or three times larger than ours, have two or three divisions.

WILSON: And the United States was sympathetic, I trust, toward your burdens?

CHRISTIDIS: Yes, the last vote of the American Senate was positive; we looked forward to it.

WILSON: One last question: Were you encouraged at that time by the support of Americans of Greek extraction for what was going on; were you aware of this as a pressure group? There had been a lot of talk of the importance of Italian-Americans in getting aid to Italy in the years after the war.

CHRISTIDIS: I don't know which were the political implications of the Americans of Greek origin,

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but I must say that they have always been of a fundamental help to Greece, through the system of remittances for their families. In spite of the passing generations, they still keep the links with the mother country, and very often this meant Senators and politicians of Greek origin who were very favorably acting for Greece in the United States. You now have a Vice President who is of Greek origin.

WILSON: Yes.

CHRISTIDIS: When Spiro Agnew was elected, his village of origin rang the bells of the churches and there was a great feast in the country. The television even showed the priests and the people celebrating as if it were an Easter festivity. It is a strange thing for a man of Greek origin to reach the top of the American constitution.

WILSON: The final question concerns the view that was held of President Truman in Europe at that time. Speaking in general terms, what was the opinion

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that was held of President Truman's role in all this? You suggested part of this earlier. Obviously Greece is rightly aware of its own history and its great contribution. President Truman was a fascinated student of history, and I wonder if he was aware of the great questions that were going on there?

CHRISTIDIS: Well, I must say that we in Greece have always understood his spirit and admired it and we have always been grateful to him. It's not only the Government but it's the people of Greece who have always had a deep sentiment of gratitude. I can say with pride that perhaps we are the only country where the slogan, "U.S.A. Go Home!" has never appeared. Not even the Communists have dared to present such a slogan. All the world, and particularly the European world, must have a deep sentiment of gratitude towards the United States of America, for twice

in one century the sons of America came across the ocean and killed themselves to save Europe and its democracy. It's thanks to the

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blood of Americans left on the European territory that today the Western spirit, the civilization of our Western countries has survived from all the disasters which fell upon them. It is with deep respect that I bend my head to those who covered the whole European continent, from the Atlantic Ocean up to Berlin and further with their tombs. It is with respect and gratitude that the Greek people turn their eyes and their spirits towards the memory of those heroes who saved the European civilization.

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