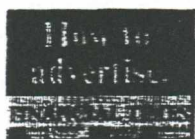


July 24 1997 Greece: EU veto over Cyprus threatened

<http://www.ft.com/hippocampus/7fele.htm>



from today's FT



## Greece: EU veto over Cyprus threatened

THURSDAY JULY 24 1997

By Edward Mortimer and Kerin Hope in Athens

Greece refused yesterday to rule out vetoing European Union membership for applicant countries in central and eastern Europe, if Cyprus is excluded from the next wave of enlargement.

In an interview with the Financial Times, Mr Costas Simitis, Greek prime minister, also rejected Turkish threats to derail talks on a Cyprus settlement if the EU goes ahead with accession negotiations with the Greek Cypriot government. The negotiations are due to start early in 1998.

Mr Simitis insisted that the accession talks should continue "in parallel" with efforts to reunite the divided island.

He said he hoped it would not be necessary for Greece to veto EU membership for former Communist countries, since the lengthy accession procedure would leave considerable time to work out a political solution.

But if in the end other EU members sought to block Cyprus's inclusion, on the grounds that it was still divided, "Greece will use all measures offered in the framework of the European Union to achieve what it considers to be right," he said.

Mr Simitis said that Greece would maintain a firm line in its disputes with Turkey, notably over Cyprus and control of the Aegean Sea, while seeking to build on this month's Madrid agreement to avoid the use or threat of force.

Mr Simitis insisted that Turkey still had to withdraw its claims on Greek territory in the Aegean, or submit them to the World Court, before a direct dialogue on other issues could proceed.

On a more conciliatory note, Mr Simitis for the first time signalled that experts appointed by both sides to sort out procedural problems would meet face to face in September and not be confined to exchanging documents.

The four "wise men" were chosen in May after EU mediation.

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Hopes were raised for a settlement of Greek-Turkish disputes, including the Cyprus problem, after meetings this month between Mr Simitis and President Süleyman Demirel of Turkey and between leaders of the two Cypriot communities at Troutbeck, New York.

But the atmosphere has been soured by statements made in Cyprus at the weekend when Mr Bulent Ecevit, Turkey's deputy prime minister, joined Mr Rauf Denktas, the Turkish Cypriot leader, to celebrate the 23rd anniversary of Turkey's military intervention on the island.

The two leaders warned that Turkey would proceed with gradual integration of northern Cyprus with the Turkish mainland if the EU persisted in negotiating membership with the purely Greek Cypriot administration in the south.

Thaw pierces the Aegean chill

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