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Αρχείο

TO: Costas Laliotas, Petros Efthimiou

FROM: Philip Gould

DATE: 24/1/2000

TO FOLLOW: 4.

MESSAGE:

please find attached

Date: January 24, 2000

To: Costa Laliotes
Petros Efthimiou

From: Philip Gould

RE: THE COMING ELECTION

It was a great pleasure to talk with you again on Sunday, and to have the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister. Much has changed since we last met, most of it for the good. Your government has been in power for almost seven years and has clearly changed the face of Greece, in the UK the Labour government has been in power for two and a half years and hopes to do the same in Britain. It seems a long time since those meetings in PASOK headquarters when victory for you was not assured, and when Labour in Britain had been so disappointedly beaten.

The over-riding impression that I got from the visit over the weekend was of change. Change in Greece, change in PASOK. In 1993 PASOK was being attacked in TV commercials as a crypto-communist party, politics were emotional and passionate, EMU a distant prospect.

In the last six years both party and nation have undergone a remarkable period of modernisation. This is clear from the polling presentation we were given on Sunday. This poll showed:

- 53.4% of the population described themselves as middle-class or lower middle-class, only 25.6% as working class.
- 21.2% of the population are involved in the stock market, a larger group than farmers.
- The centre of political gravity in Greece is clearly in the centre with almost 1 in 3 voters placing themselves in the centre of the political spectrum, and more placing themselves to the right than to the left. (I am aware that left and right have a particular meaning in Greece, but this is still a remarkable finding).
- PASOK dominates the centre, New Democracy has been pushed to the right.
- PASOK has won plaudits for economic competence, less so for its social programmes.
- The Prime Minister's strengths are his rationality and economic competence, less the traditional emotional appeal of Greek politics.
- Greece is on the cusp of joining the Single Currency
- The Greek economy has had an extraordinary transformation in recent years.

This change in the social and political map of Greece is remarkable and dramatic. It has many consequences, with opportunities as well as threats for PASOK:

Opportunities

- PASOK and The Prime Minister can now dominate the centre in a way unimaginable just a few years ago.
- PASOK and the PM can draw support from emerging social classes, centred on the new middle classes.
- PASOK can become the party of trust, competence, economic management.
- PASOK and the PM can use entry into the Single Currency as the pivot by which they confirm their ascendancy in terms of the economy and overseas respect.
- Simitis is considerably ahead of Karamanlis as best Prime Minister.

Threats

- New PASOK and the PM lack emotional appeal. They are respected rather than loved. Minds have been won rather than hearts.
- The new identity of PASOK as economically competent and appealing to the middle-class relies strongly upon the personality of the PM. It is probable that the modernisation of PASOK lags behind the modernisation of Greece.
- PASOK has to find a way of holding on to new supporters as well as continuing to motivate its traditional supporters. This is the problem facing all modernising social democratic supporters.
- The emergence of a new social and electoral landscape has meant that both PASOK and New Democracy lack the clear definition they once had.
- This lack of definition, and in particular the failure of PASOK to be able to define the election on its terms means that PASOK will be vulnerable to unforeseen events during the election period.
- There is a danger that New Democracy will be better able to define the election on their terms. They have a double opportunity:

To characterise New Democracy as the future, and PASOK and the PM as the past
They may be able to do this because:

- Karamanlis is younger than the PM.
- With the exception of a short gap in the early 1990's PASOK has been in power for almost twenty years and has become the political establishment.
- The mood may be for change and this may become a change election, if this is so it strongly favours the incumbent.

To characterise New Democracy and Karamanlis as in touch, and for the people
They may be able to do this because:

- Karamanlis is a more populist politician than the PM.
- The PM has a reputation for being distant and reserved.
- The government has a reputation for economic competence but unemployment is still high and social issues remain problematic. There may be a sense that the fruits of economic success may not have reached down to the people.

PASOK lacks vital information about the electorate. It does not know:

- What New Democracy/Karamanlis strengths and weaknesses are.
- What PASOK/Simitis strengths and weaknesses are.
- The defining attributes of both leaders and parties.

The importance of the economy in the election

- The importance of The Single Currency in the election
- Differences in perceptions between the party and the PM.
- The extent to which this is a change election.
- There is little sense of message, either attacking or positive.

It is true that much of this is known impressionistically, but not without the certainty and precision necessary for an election campaign.

Implications

- PASOK and the PM have great strengths in leadership experience and economic competence but have yet to transform these into an assured election winning position.
- They lack emotional support, populist support, support from their traditional base, and may suffer from a sense that they are representatives of the past not the future, and that they are out of touch and distant.
- They have yet to define the election on their terms and they lack the quantified polling information that is necessary to gain such a definition.
- They are vulnerable to a New Democracy campaign based on change and populism, and to external events that may set the government back at crucial junctures in the campaign.
- The election is winnable, but not yet won.

Recommendations

Immediately initiate an opinion poll to:

- Establish party and leadership attributes, strengths and weaknesses.
 - Include projective polling to establish message and definition
 - Establish mood of the electorate: is this a change election?
 - Establish salience and importance of the economy and The Single currency.
 - Establish election deciding issues.
 - Find optimum defences against key attacks.
- Use the poll for an intensive period of strategic discussion to develop strategy, message and plan. This is the absolute requirement.
 - Develop a targeting strategy - farmers; traditional working class key here.
 - Develop a radical and motivating next term programme. This is vital to gain a sense of renewal and change.
 - Strengthen the campaign team, and in particular your attacking operation. This is going to be a tough election.

Conclusion

There is much to be done. The challenge is very different from 1993 but every bit as exciting. PASOK has done enough in government to deserve to win, but in some ways its very success makes it vulnerable to a party holding the mantle of change, claiming to speak for the people. PASOK can win but victory is not certain. A great deal must be done very quickly for PASOK to gain the electoral success its success in government warrants.