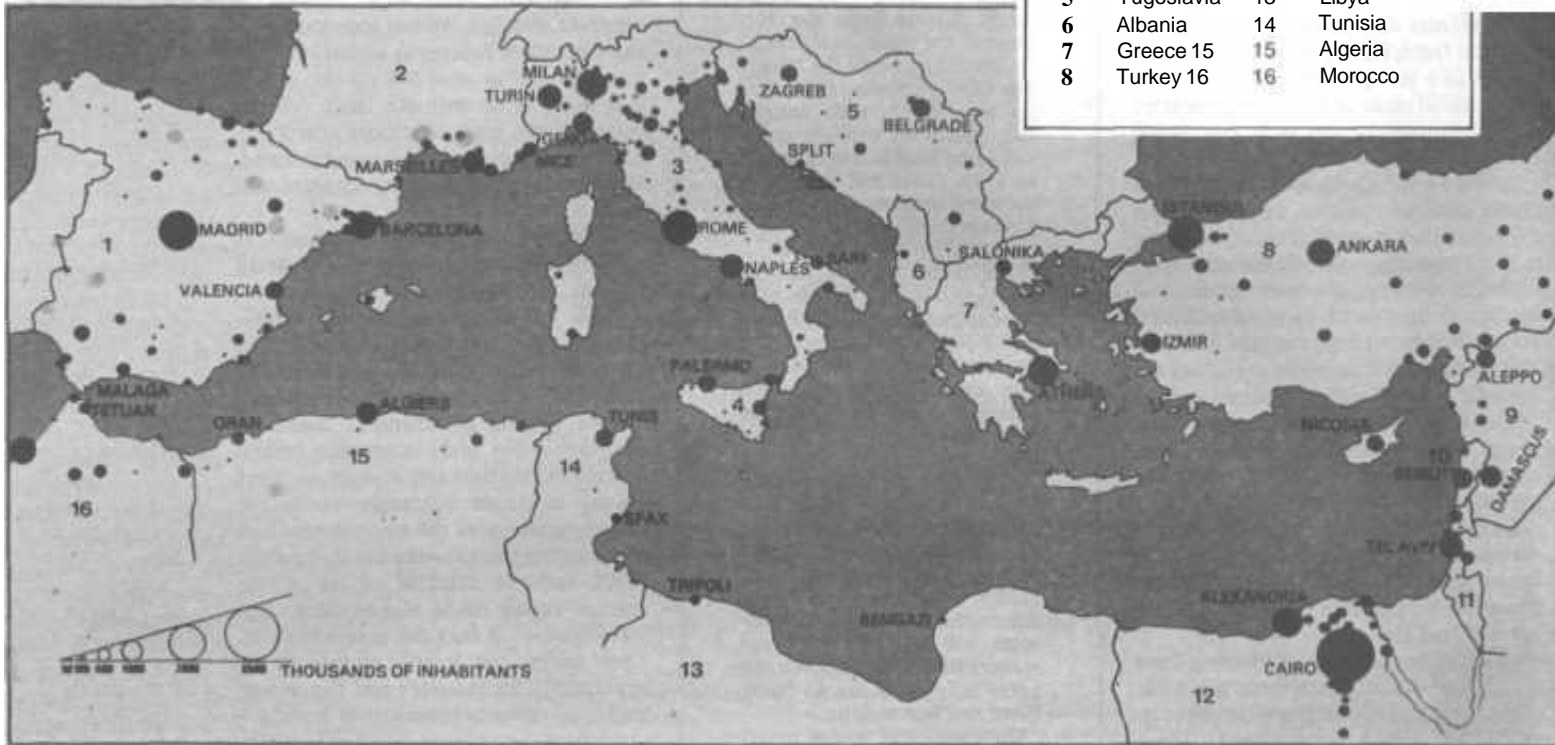


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|---|------------|----|---------|
| 1 | Spain | 9 | Syria |
| 2 | France | 10 | Lebanon |
| 3 | Italy | 11 | Israel |
| 4 | Sicily | 12 | Egypt |
| 5 | Yugoslavia | 13 | Libya |
| 6 | Albania | 14 | Tunisia |
| 7 | Greece | 15 | Algeria |
| 8 | Turkey | 16 | Morocco |



Countries of the Med: Major population centres of the Mediterranean Basin (based on *Statistical Yearbook UN, 1974*)

Green Europe The Southern Suntrap

The Mediterranean is evocative of sun, sea and Mariana. But the southern European countries are changing rapidly, as **Russell King** explains

For the average Briton or north European, southern Europe is a holiday destination, a place where, for one or two weeks each year, in a paradise-like environment of sun, sea and sand, hedonism reigns supreme. Little do we understand that such environments are artificially created to satisfy our commodified, packaged tastes. Little do we know of the real processes underpinning the transformation of Mediterranean societies and landscapes. Even the location of our holiday destination may be only dimly perceived — witness the lack of imprecision of maps in holiday brochures.

The main thing is to get there fast — 'flight time two hours' — and enjoy yourself. To say that you have seen Spain when you have been to Benidorm or Torremolinos is to say that one understands art after seeing an Andy Capp cartoon. The popular image of the Mediterranean is thus restricted to a few coastal locations where the essential, manufactured elements of the holiday package prevail.

However, venture a few kilometres inland from the coast, into the rugged mountains of the Sierra Nevada for instance, or the pullulating back streets of Naples or Istanbul, and another scene is discovered, of poverty, deprivation, street urchins and slums: the Third World of Europe.

As the European Community (EC) moves, seemingly inexorably, towards 1992, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that growth will continue to accu-

mulate in the core areas of Europe — regions like London and the south-east of England, Paris and Randstad Holland — to the relative detriment of the periphery. The hoped-for spread of this growth to the edges of Europe once the economies of these marginal regions have been shored up by structural and regional funds (the vision of EC President Jacques Delors) is probably over-optimistic.

It is true that the pace of economic growth in most of Europe's Mediterranean countries has been rapid over the past 30 years; in many instances and for many sequences of years, this rate has exceeded those recorded by the industrialised countries of the north. But two caveats must be entered here. First the percentage growth rates in the south are exaggerated because they are measured against low base levels. Second, an examination of the type of growth reveals that the new industrial and touristic developments are mainly externally controlled, a process linked to the internationalisation of the European and world economies. The spatial division of capital and labour, clearly expressed in Western Europe through the core-periphery pattern, relegates to the southern periphery the role of reproducing a low-grade labour supply, which since the 1950s has migrated to fulfil the needs of the industrial economies of the core for cheap workers.

While it is true that, at least since the 1970s, capital has reached out in tentacles to colonise certain nodes in the

periphery, the ownership of this capital, and therefore the destination of any profits, remains rooted in the major European and world financial centres.

Typical of the new industrial developments which have mushroomed around Europe's Mediterranean coasts are the oil refineries and petrochemical complexes which, with their red and white hooped chimneys hissing and glinting in the southern sun, are symbolic of the brave new world of southern industrialisation. Sadly the brave new world was short-lived. The oil crises of the 1970s and early 1980s killed off their *raison d'être*; demand for their oil, chemical and acrylic fibre products fell and, especially in Italy, financial corruption destroyed their credibility. Environmentally disruptive, such plants also compromised the touristic vocation of many stretches of pristine coast.

Ecological damage continues. At a time when West German chemical firms are having to spend one-third of their research and development budgets on anti-pollution devices, relocation to countries where environmental protection laws are lax is an attractive proposition. When the savings on anti-pollution measures can be combined with easy access to natural resources the attractions are even greater — as the examples of wood pulp-processing in Portugal and bauxite at Itéa in Greece attest.

Thus the economy and landscapes of southern Europe have not only been transformed but also deformed. This is the case not just in the physical sense (for instance the despoliation of olive groves downwind of the Tranto steelworks in southern Italy), but also in the debasement of economic, political and even cultural values, and in the exaggeration of regional inequalities. Capital is not interested in balanced regional development; it is interested in accumulating maximum profits and this normally implies locations where labour, infrastructure, transport and a market are available.

The Greek case is typical. The famous cloud that hangs over Athens — a noxious smog produced by industry, central-heating systems and the excessive number of cars circulating in the city — is a potent symbol of the deformed nature of Greek development. By 1980 35% of the total Greek population resided in Athens. As well as people, national and international capital are drawn into the city in a process of accumulation stage-managed by the national economic and political leaders. Short-term interests prevail; spatial planning is weak and ineffective. Agriculture has never been recognised as an important variable in the economic planning process. Instead it was viewed as a residual sector, a reserve of potential cheap labour, with emigration promoted as an instrument for reducing the social pressures of poverty and unemployment. The Greek regional problem cannot be solved ex-

cept by far-reaching decentralisation of political power combined with a committed programme of public investment in economic and social infrastructures in regions other than Athens and Thessalonika.

But industry is only part of the story, and perhaps no longer a major part. In most southern European countries the tertiary sector dominates, contributing 50-60% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Italy, Spain and Greece and 40-50% in Portugal and Turkey. When invisible elements like money sent back by emigrants or profits from shipping are included, the proportions rise further.

Tourism and emigration are both heavily dependent on external forces. Emigration is almost wholly controlled by the countries receiving the migrants, as illustrated by the events of 1973-4 when West Germany, Holland and France abruptly halted in-movement from non-EC countries. Tourism contains a double dependence: on the metropolitan countries for the capital to finance tourist facilities such as hotel chains, and on those same countries to sustain the mass tourist flows to the Mediterranean. Tourism also poses problems of interpretation as to whether it is fundamentally a good or a bad thing. The less well-off, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the Mediterranean region, generally welcome mass tourism. Wealthy locals, affluent tourists and foreign social scientists lament it. Indeed some development specialists regard the massive annual transfer of 100m tourists to the Mediterranean shore as 'an extreme form of neo-colonial exploitation, a systematic device for the destruction of everything that is beautiful'. On the other hand, the local attitude is summed up in the Ibizan saying: 'If the tourists stop coming there are not enough pines on Sa Talaia [the highest hill on the island] for the people to hang themselves from!'¹³

Compared to the industrial pollution of Athens or Barcelona or Genoa, tourism is a factory without a chimney, a cleaner form of development altogether. But there is a darker side — the corruption of traditional values by ill-mannered visitors, the subservient nature of so much touristic employment, the problem of seasonality, the demands hotels make on local scarce resources, notably water, and the dramatic impact made on the built environment. Already a ribbon development of hotels and tourist services encloses almost the entire Mediterranean coast of Spain, France and Italy. Greece's fragmented coastline has suffered less. The battle between mass tourism with its speculative construction boom and landscape conservation has now been carried to Turkey where 400,000 British tourists visited in 1988, a doubling over the previous year.

Away from the concrete coasts, rural areas are becoming increasingly differentiated by a wide range of social and

economic processes. In the rugged highlands continuing depopulation causes the degradation of thousands of villages which, along with their stony fields, crumble into oblivion. In other areas, slightly more favoured, emigrant money and even return migration bring some of the lifeblood back to rural communities. Many coastal plains and river valleys have benefitted from farm rationalisation and irrigation, creating oases of agricultural prosperity such as the newly-settled plains of southern Italy or the Spanish *huertas*. In central and north-eastern Italy rural industrialisation is well underway, turning traditional craftworkers into modern entrepreneurs. Finally, in scenic areas such as Tuscany and Umbria, agritourism offers a viable strategy for revival, following the French model of *gîtes* (rented cottages) and rural camping.

The external political relations of southern Europe are also changing. The enlargement of the EC has brought Spain, Portugal and Greece firmly into the European fold; together with Italy and to a lesser extent France, they form a solid bloc of Mediterranean power in Brussels. Already the common agricultural policy (CAP), for years geared mainly to lining the pockets of already-rich north European farmers, has shifted to a concerted strategy of helping Mediterranean farming. The fact that the next two EC presidents will be from Greece and Spain should further strengthen the interests of the Mediterranean tier.

Yet the southern European countries also look, increasingly uneasily, across the Mediterranean Sea. Events in Libya (which shelled the Italian island of Lampedusa after the American bombing of Tripoli), in Lebanon and in Israel-Palestine form key parts of the pan-Mediterranean consciousness of these European states, as well as being threats to their security. Co-operation with all other Mediterranean countries (except Albania) takes place on the vital issue of marine pollution control. But regional conflicts, for example over Gibraltar and over Cyprus, impose strains between EC members (Britain and Spain) or between existing and would-be members (Greece and Turkey).

On a global scale, the Mediterranean has become a front line in East-West power politics. In the past the Mediterranean has been seen as a centripetal force unifying the countries around its shore by ties of empire, trade and culture. Increasingly it is being made a shatter belt between power blocs of conflicting ideology and religion. The uncertainties of the world are now the uncertainties of southern France. 0

¹ R Hudson & JR Lewis in AM Williams (ed) *Southern Europe Transformed*, Harper & Row, 1984.

² M Nikolinakos in R Hudson & JR Lewis (eds) *Uneven Development In Southern Europe*, Methuen, 1988.

³ Quotations from J Boissevain in D Seers, B Schaffer & ML Kiljunen (eds) *Underdeveloped Europe*, Harvester Press, 1979.

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