Interview:
Pantelis Kapsis
Greek Government Spokesman
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Andrew Marr:
Tomorrow’s EU summit’s going to be a nail-biter, and key to the whole enterprise is the situation in Greece. The government there is desperately trying to reschedule its debts, but, as we heard in the news, Greece has rejected German demands to hand over future budget decisions to EU officials. Pantelis Kapsis is the spokesman for the Greek Government and he joins me now from Athens. Welcome Mr Kapsis.

Pantelis Kapsis:
Good morning.

Andrew Marr:
Good morning. Can I ask, first of all, about the government’s general attitude to this notion that there should be an EU commissioner who will effectively take control? (Kapsis tries to interject) An EU budget commissioner is the word.

Pantelis Kapsis:
Yes, there’s no need for that. There was a decision taken in October about the ways of monitoring how the execution of the budget would take place and move on that decision. I don’t think that there’s any need for any further measures now.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Nonetheless, you know this is a firm proposal which is going to be discussed at the summit - that there should be an EU commissioner who would put in …

**PANTELIS KAPSIS:**
*(over)* I don’t know if it’s … I don’t know if it’s going to be discussed in the summit. Maybe in the Eurozone working group, but I am not sure it’s going to be discussed in the summit.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And I mean if that was proposed seriously, what would the Greek Government’s reaction be to it?

**PANTELIS KAPSIS:**
That there’s no need for such a measure. The question of the budget is the responsibility of the Greek Government and it continues to be such.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And that would be one stage too far in restraining or suppressing Greek democracy, in your view?

**PANTELIS KAPSIS:**
It’s not … It’s a matter of national sovereignty - yes, it’s that simple - and there is no need for such a measure. I think we have gone a long way reducing the deficit. If you take into account that we’ve been the fourth year of recession, the fall of the deficit has been quite big, so I think we are moving along on the right track and we’ll go on on that track.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And would it be fair to say that pushing further against Greek national sovereignty in
this way would dangerously enflame feelings in Greece where I know they’re already running high?

PANTELIS KAPSIS:
Obviously it would have repercussions there, yes. One should take that into account as well.

ANDREW MARR:
Can I ask about …

PANTELIS KAPSIS:
(over) But I don’t think there’s a need for such a measure. I think it’s an idea that was floated, but …

ANDREW MARR:
We’ll see. Can I ask about the other side of the talks which is that the debtors, including the private banks, have to write off half their debt pretty much to get things moving again. Do you think that’s going to be agreed tomorrow?

PANTELIS KAPSIS:
I think that the discussions have gone quite well and we are very close to an agreement. That’s an assessment I would make, yes.

ANDREW MARR:
And of course nobody can foretell the future, but what is your sense about the likelihood, or otherwise, of Greece being able to remain inside the euro and not to have to slide towards a disorderly default?

PANTELIS KAPSIS:
Well we are doing our best. I think we have difficult discussions with the European Union in the next couple of days, but at the end I hope that we’ll find an agreement that will safeguard the position of Greece within the Eurozone and we’ll move in that direction. There’s no other option for us and we are determined to do whatever is needed.
ANDREW MARR:
Yuh. And how confident are you that you’re going to get the 130 billion euros that you need for the next tranche of the loans?

PANTELIS KAPSIS:
Well this government was formed exactly in order to reach that agreement, so, as I said, we are going to do our best to safeguard this agreement.

ANDREW MARR:
You sound, if I may say so, worried and unsure rather than hugely optimistic at the moment.

PANTELIS KAPSIS:
No, I’m not worried or unsure, but I don’t want to make it sound that it’s an easy agreement or that we don’t have difficult issues ahead. We have very difficult issues ahead, but we are determined to do our best to solve them.

ANDREW MARR:
And Greek democracy is the bottom line? In the end, Greek democracy is more important than anything else?

PANTELIS KAPSIS:
Well the welfare of the Greek people and the Greek democracy are obviously our guideline, but this is in the context of the European Union and European solidarity, so these are not opposing ideas for us.

ANDREW MARR:
And so a final message particularly for Germany watching at the moment?

PANTELIS KAPSIS:
Well that we’ll do together whatever is needed to reach that agreement.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright Mr Kapsis, thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning.

PANTELIS KAPSIS:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS