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Absurd Switzerland (A speech to the honour of Vaclav Havel)

On 28 August 1278, more than a hundred years before Jan Hus was imprisoned in Gottlieben and burnt in Constance, Rudolf of Hasburg (from Aargau) and his Swiss troops defeated King Ottocar the Second of Bohemia at the battle of Marchfeld near Dürnkrut. In 1526 Bohemia finally fell—for almost four hundred years—under the domination of the Hasburgs, the most successful of the expatriate Swiss families and the one whose return home we had victoriously defended ourselves against, suffice it only to mention the examples of Morgarten and Sempach. And although the fall of the old Swiss Confederation in 1798 ushered in the development of the new Confederation, it was thus that in 1918 modern Czechoslovakia was to emerge from World War I. Both states are thus the consequences of a defeat: we were defeated by our own side, whilst Czechoslovakia was defeated by Austro-Hungary. Then came Hitler. A Thanksgiving Mass was said in Berne Cathedral as the Great Powers left Czechoslovakia to itself in 1938: the latter

did not defend itself, the Sudetenland was occupied, and, only shortly later, Czech Bohemia and Moravia became a protectorate whilst Slovenia was turned into a vassal state.

The question may thus be posed as to whether Switzerland would have defended itself in a similar situation. Yet the question is unanswerable, since Switzerland was never in this situation. It was catastrophic, however, for the Czechs, who were forced to work for Hitler, whilst the Jews were gassed, (and let the example of Lidice suffice for the whole affairs). We were not attacked, though we did have to work for Hitler, and the Jews we turned back at our borders were gassed. After the War Czechoslovakia fell to Stalin and to the policies of his successors, and Czech attempts to develop a humaner form of communism, like those of the GDR and Hungary, were prevented by violence.

You, Vaclav Havel, wrote about this in your essay *The Events of Totality*: In our country in the 1950s there were enormous concentration

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camps containing tens of thousands of innocent people. On the Youth Construction Sites tens of thousands enthused over their new faith and sang hymns to reconstruction. People were tortured and executed, they made dramatic escapes over the border, they conspired, yet at the same time congratulatory verses to the man at the top were penned. The President of the Republic signed the death sentences of his closest friends, and yet it was still possible to meet him occasionally in the street. The songs of the idealists and fanatics, the ranting of the political criminals and the sufferings of the heroes belong to the past, as the people now see it. The fifties were a bad period, but there have often been these periods in the history of mankind. They could always be associated, or at least compare, with such times: in any case, they always recalled history in one way or another. I would not dare affirm that nothing took place during this periods, or that they knew no events. The fundamental manifesto of the political power installed in Czechoslovakia after the Soviet invasion of 1968 was called *Lesson from the Crisis Years*, and herein lay a symbol: this new political power really learnt from these lessons. It learnt what could happen when a plurality of views and interests opened the door even only a hairbreadth: a threat to totalitarian itself. With these lessons, then, political power renounced everything except its own survival: all the possible mechanisms of indirect or direct manipulation of life began to develop configurations unknown until then, with a dynamic of their own, and nothing could be left to chance any longer.

The last nineteen years in Czechoslovakia could almost serve as a school example of a mature or late-totalitarian system. Revolutionary ethos and terror have been substituted by stultified immobility, the alibi

of carefulness, bureaucratic anonymity and the boredom of stereotype, and the only ambition of these qualities has been to develop into the triviality they really are as fully as possible. The songs of enthusiastic and the laments of the tortured have died down; lawlessness has donned silk gloves and moved from the infamy of its torture chambers to the upholstered lounges of the bureaucracy. At the most, the President of the Republic may be glimpsed from behind the armoured glass windows of his limousine whilst surrounded by a police convoy he hurries to the airport to welcome Colonel Gheddafi. The late-totalitarian system depends on such refined, complex and powerful instruments of manipulation that it no longer needs murder and its victims. And even less does it need enthusiastic builders of utopia, causing disturbance with their dreams of a better future. The concept of *real existing socialism* which this era has coined for itself indicates precisely those who have no place in it: dreamers."

And if you, Vaclav Havel, as President of the Republic in your 1990 New Year's speech went a little further into the content of your dreams, you might ask yourself just what kind of Republic you are dreaming of. I will give you the answer: of an independent, free, democratic Republic which is economically prosperous and socially just at the same time: in short, of a humane Republic which serves its people, and thus hopes that its people will serve it in turn. A Republic of people educated in all fields, because without these, no problem can be solved, whether it be human, economic, ecological, social or political, is also the dream of many Swiss: that they might live in such a Republic, even in the dream which you, Vaclav Havel, are dreaming. But the reality in which the Swiss to their dreaming is a different one.

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As a dramatist, my dear Vaclav Havel, you have dealt with the reality you lived in before political dogmatism collapsed, and staged this reality in plays which many critics include amongst the Absurd. For me, these plays are not absurd, nor senseless, but tragical grotesques: the grotesque is the expression of paradox, of contradiction, and develops when a rational idea in itself, such as communism, (which implies contemplation of a juster social order), is turned into reality; primitive Christianity was also communist, and what has become of this? Through Men everything becomes paradoxical: sense turns into nonsense, and freedom into constriction, precisely because Man himself is a paradox—an irrational rationality.

And Switzerland may also be compared to your tragical grotesques: though different from the prisons you have been thrown into, my dear Havel, it is nonetheless a prison, a prison which the Swiss have taken refuge in. The Swiss feel they are free, freer than all other men, free as prisoners in the prison of their neutrality, because outside their prison everything was collapsing, and thus they only felt sure of not being overcome when within their prison.

There is only one problem with this prison: that of proving that it is no prison, that it is a bastion of liberty; yet from the outside, a prison is a prison, and its inhabitants are prisoners, and those who are imprisoned are not free; for the outside world, only the warders are free, because if they were not, then they too would be prisoners.

In order to resolve this contradiction, the prisoners have introduced a duty common to warders: each prisoner offers proof, insofar as he is his own warder, of his own liberty. In this way the Swiss have the dialectical

advantage that they are free, prisoners and warders at the same time. Their prison needs no walls, as its prisoners are also warders, and guard themselves, and since the warders are free men, they carry on their business amongst themselves and with the whole world—and how! Yet as they are prisoners at the same time, they cannot enter the UN, and find the EEC a worrying prospect. Those who live dialectically have psychologically problems. And since the warders are also prisoners, they can also harbour the suspicion that they are prisoners, and not warders or free men, for which reason the prison administration made every prisoner feel in a survey, from which survey the administration concluded that the prisoner feel imprisoned, and not free; and as the administration concluded this from many surveys, it has formed a mountain of such surveys and the further one looks, the more one realises that behind this mountain there is another, and yet another.

But at this mountain range would only be used in case the prison were attacked, and as this has never happened, the warders have suddenly realised from these documents regarding themselves, that they are prisoners and not free men, and have thus begun not to feel as the prison administration wanted them to. And in order to feel free again, as warders and not as prisoners, they have asked the prison administration information as to who might have established the documents. But the mountains of documents are so large, that the prison administration has come to the conclusion that they have established themselves.

Now when everyone is responsible, no-one has any responsibility any longer. Fear of no longer being safe in prison has brought the mountains of documents into existence. This fear is not without foundation. Who is there,

who would not like to be a prisoner in a prison where people are free, and thus the prison has become a worldwide attraction, many try to become prisoners, which they can manage if they possess the means, liberty is obviously something costly, whilst those without the means could try to achieve that security within the prison, which is only awarded to the free prisoners, and thus many are rejected. The prison administration is not to be envied. On the one hand there are too few free prisoners to keep the prison free, to clean the luxury cells, the corridors, and even the bars, so that outsiders must be allowed into the prison who, only interested in earning money, renovate, restore, rebuild and keep the prison working, but see both those prisoners who earn money but who are free, as also those who are not free. On the other hand, every prison must guard something, though if the prisoners guard themselves as their own warders, it might be suspected that the warders are guarding something other than themselves, and the suspicion might get stronger that the real object of the prison is not the liberty of the prisoners, but is to protect the bank secret.

However, this might all be, the prison prospers and its business is so closely linked to business outside itself that the doubt gradually arise as to whether the prison really exists: it has thus become a phantom prison. In order to prove its own and their own existence, the prison administration thus gives the warders, who are their own prisoners, billions of Swiss francs for up-to-date arms, which regularly become obsolete and thus create the need for new ones, regardless of the probability that a war would mean collapse of everything the administration is trying to defend.

The administration thus allows itself the

utopian idea that this Nibelung strategy, in a technical world of growing probably of catastrophe, guarantees absolute security, and this instead of coming to the conclusion the the prison—Switzerland—could afford to be cunning and do away with its warders, relying on the fact that its prisoners are not imprisoned, but free: this would mean that Switzerland would no longer be a prison, but a part of Europe, one of its regions, as in fact Europe is beginning to decline into regions, despite the shock of German reunification.

The prison has thus fallen into discredit. It is casting doubt on itself. The prison administration, which attempts to settle everything legally, with rules, now maintains that the prison is in a state of crisis, and that the prisoners are only really free as long as they remain loyal to the administration, whereas many prisoners feel that the prison is in a state of crisis because the prisoners are not free, and really are prisoners, and thus there is this internal prison debate, which only creates confusion, since the prison administration is busying itself with celebration for the 700th anniversary of the foundation of the prison, even though the prison in that period was no prison but a much-feared den of thieves. Now we do not know what we are supposed to be celebrating—the prison, or liberty. If we celebrate the prison, then the prisoners fell imprisoned, whilst if we celebrate liberty, then the prison is redundant. Since we dare not live without the prison, however, we will celebrate yet again our independence, as it is of no importance to those outside, whether we are imprisoned or free in the prison of our neutrality.

It is possible to survive war and occupation, even though at the cost of many victims, which I would wish no-one, yet your country

and you yourself, my dear Havel, have experienced this, whilst we Swiss, with a resistance which has not been tested, have experienced, and experience, nothing. I had a remarkable feeling, my dear Havel, as I was writing this Speech, and which I still have as I deliver it. There is a great deal of embarrassment in this feeling, since you yourself might now be wrongly used as proof of the fact that our Western world is in order, and that there is nothing greater than liberty...

Here with us politics have also been transferred from the ideological sphere into the economic sphere: political issues are thus economic issues. Where may the state intrude, and where may it not; what may it subsidize, and what not; what may it tax, and what not? Salaries and leisure time are decided by negotiation.

Peace threatens to be more dangerous than war. A fearful, though not cynical statement. Our roads are battlefields, our skies abandoned to poisonous fumes, our ocean oil sumps, our fields plagued with pesticides, the Third World has been plundered, even worse than the Orient by the Crusades was, and it is not surprising that it is now blackmailing us. Not war, but peace is the father of all things, and was arises out of uncontrolled peace.

Peace is a problem we have to solve. Peace has the fatal characteristic, that is integrates war. The driving force of free market economy is competitive struggle, economic war, the battle for further markets. Humanity is exploding like the universe we live in, and we do not know what it will be like when there are ten billion inhabitants on the planet. Free market economy now works under the primacy of liberty: perhaps planned economy will then work under the primacy of justice.

Perhaps the Marxist experiment came to early.

What can the individual do? What now?—you will also be wondering, Vaclav Havel. The individual is an existential concept, whereas the state, the institutions and economic systems are general concepts. Politics are concerned with the general, not with the existential, yet must refer to the individual in order to work. Man is more irrational than he is rational, and his emotions influence him more strongly than his *ratio*. Politics exploit this. The triumphal procession of ideologies during our century may only be explained in this way: the appeal to reason is useless, especially when a totalitarian ideology wears the mask of reason. The individual has to choose between the humanly possible and humanly impossible.

Society can never be just, free and socially-oriented; it can only become juster, free and more socially-oriented. What the individual can demand, and not only can, but must, is what you have demanded, Vaclav Havel: human rights; bread for everyone; no utopias but just the obvious; the attributes of me; the symbols of his power; rights which do not rape the individual but permit his co-habitation with other individuals; rights as an expression of tolerance—traffic regulations, to put it broadly. Human rights alone are existential rights, and all ideological revolutions aim at suppressing them, requiring a new kind of human. Who has not wanted a new kind of human?

My dear Vaclav Havel, your task as President coincides with Vaclav Havel's task as a dissident. Honourable President, you are here amongst the Swiss, the Swiss have greeted you, the President of the Swiss Confederation has received you, a high Swiss official has

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held the *laudatio*, and I, a Swiss citizen, have also talked, because there is a lot of talking in Switzerland. What kind of men are we Swiss? To be spared by fate is reason for neither shame nor credit, it is one of the torments of mankind. Towards the end of his *Politeia*, Plato narrates that after death, the soul of every being has to draw by lot and choose a new life: "By chance, however, Ulysses' soul drew the very last lot, and so he came last to take his choice. As his soul had given up all ambition, recalling its earlier

efforts, it went round for some time, and looked for the life of a secluded and tranquil man, and found one somewhere which the other souls had left unobserved. And when Ulysses' soul discovered it, it said it would have done the same thing even if it had drawn the right to the first choice, and repeated that it had chosen that life with pleasure".

Friedrich Dürrenmatt
Dec. 15-16th, 1990



A stale doctrine

During all these years, I have agreed to neutrality with reluctance. I accepted it when it became an established foreign policy. I also accepted it when generations of Swedish political leaders asserted that it was just our neutrality that had kept us out of the two wars. As a matter of fact, as most Swedes I felt more indoctrinated than persuaded by this logic.

Why am I now critical of neutrality? Because it could be considered an excuse for hardly ever, or never, committing ourselves in problems that are vital for Europe and for the democratic world. Since childhood, I have remember with shame our deference to the Germans during the Second World War, and I remember our partial participation when Jews

were deported, and when Germans were allowed to cross our country into Norway. I even remember, years later at my home, lively discussion about the extradition of the Baltic people, and I realise now that a lot of Swedes share my same feeling of shame. We must say, however, that Sweden has had a voice in international politics, a voice made stronger especially by Olof Palme during the 60s and 70s, first of all by criticising the United States for the unjust Vietnam War.

Our protests, moreover, were often raised against those countries and regimes that were friendly and from whom we had nothing to fear. But when it was the question of our powerful neighbouring country, the USSR, we always showed a silent respect notwith-

standing the fact that the Soviets systematically had recourse to terrorism and violent actions. There are more and more people who ask for a re-thinking of the concept of neutrality against the background of the events which have shaken the Eastern European countries, leading to their liberation. Neutrality is also changing its character because the USSR has changed its foreign politics and the European Community is developing in a way that rules out the possibility of serious conflicts among its members. The members of the Community are thus getting closer and closer.

A new element is now added, an element which, according to me, makes it necessary for us to throw off the yoke of our neutrality. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, and Iraq's incredible abuse of power towards foreign nationals have shown a completely new brotherhood among countries that have once been hostile each the other. I deem it extremely encouraging that, for the first time, the United States and the USSR have agreed at the United Nations to support one another against a terroristic regime.

Moreover, it is encouraging and comforting to see that after Great Britain declared itself immediately ready to risk the lives of its citizens, France, Holland and Greece have given their assent as well. Belgium, Italy and Spain have sent their naval aid to the Gulf. What is happening today is something unheard of in post-war history, and it shows a sentiment of brotherhood and solidarity we have not experienced in this century.

In this situation, Sweden continues to "pass the word on". As usual, we refer to our politics of neutrality. As usual, we declare that we were the first to vote for sanctions against Iraq at the United Nations. As usual, we hint

to the fact that we played the "special role of intermediaries", a role that, in this case, certainly had an impact on Saddam Hussein's decision to release the Swedes, while still holding hostages the citizens of the countries that kept protesting and proved ready to run some risk. Of course, we must be glad about the possibility of any human being escaping the terrorism of Iraq. In the meantime, however, we must observe that we are keeping out of the unanimous and active protests upheld by all the other friendly countries against this regime of terrorism.

I do not think that it is in our interest to continue referring to our old neutrality. Today human brotherhood needs something more than a stale doctrine. It needs heart, care and the will to run some risks. Our tepid attitude towards the great questions will, in the long run, not be respected by the others any longer. If we give up our fixed idea of neutrality we will be free and able to face and accept the responsibility for the problems of tomorrow; allowed to adopt those positions that neutrality prevented us from taking in the past. I am obviously referring to Europe. Until now I have fully backed the Government's decision to conclude the "European Economic Space" agreement. It would be undoubtedly the most efficient way to establish ties with the European Community.

When the "European Economical Space" agreement will have been reached, Sweden will have both the right and the duty to engineer its next step in the path to Europe. Should membership be in our interest, neutrality should be the last thing to prevent us from taking this step.

It is possible, and even probable, that the present development of world events will speed up the development of the EEC as a

political union, and our imprisonment in neutrality could frustrate our efforts to become a member. Such an isolation would be extremely negative for us. Should Sweden abandon neutrality, it will be free to take part in the European political union. We should welcome such a turnover. We should solidly take part in the whole development of a democratic brotherhood in Western Europe.

Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson has for the first time shown a practical and flexible atti-

tude towards important international problems. He should assume the reins for a reorganisation of Swedish foreign policy. Nobody has required us to carry this self-imposed burden, that is named neutrality, for an eternity. Let us abandon the tradition, and work for the future. The Swedes need to struggle for something.

Pehr G. Gyllenhammar
Volvo President
Aug. 26th, 1990

LA STAMPA

The Czar: a regret

The first great procession to walk across the Moscow roads after the 1917 revolution can be considered the latest sign of a mighty religious awakening which, after having brought about a state of fervency in all the Eastern European Catholic countries, now seems to have reached its utmost limit in orthodox Russia. While waiting for consumer goods, which are late in arriving, the word and piety of Christianity are filling in the gap left by the collapse of communism.

The most striking thing, however, is not the armistice between the church and the Soviet Union, which is anything but recent. From Stalin to Gorbachev, from the "great patriotic wars" to *perestroika*, power in Soviet Union has always tried, in the moments of emergency, to ally itself with the orthodox clergy, which still preserves so much of its ancient

influence on the Russian people. What is more striking is the amalgamation, or one could say the complex and deep heterogeneity, characterising the unprecedented event which occurred last Sunday under the Moscow sky: the wideness of the popular procession following the icons and the tabernacles and the deferential passing of the capital municipal authorities before the eyes of the bystanders.

The symbolic meaning was that this procession, taking place during the anniversary of the foundation of Moscow, has consciously opposed the heretofore accepted Revolution Day, which will be celebrated within a month. This all occurred in the background of the revival manifesto, with its religious as well as realistic implications, that Solzhenitsyn proclaimed to the "shirokaja strana",

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the wide Russian land, from his hermitage in Vermont.

It must be added that in this revival of tradition the defenceless and melancholy face of Czar Nicholas II, whose full-size portrait has been carried on back like a holy icon during the procession, has reappeared. This is quite a recent event. Since when Boris Yeltsin, who was then top regional leader of the Party, ordered the destruction of the house of merchant Ipatjev in old Ekaterinenburg, now called Sverdlovsk, the slain czar has become an object of a strange and intense posthumous cult. The merchant's house, which has been razed to the ground by Yeltsin because it had become the landing-place of an unceasing procession of pilgrims, was the one in which the czar had lived for a short time with his family before the day of the big massacre. Since then, the pilgrimage in memory of the slain sovereigns has survived in the very heart of Russian's collective consciousness.

The Czars, especially the innocent and hemophiliac Czarevic Alexis ("killed in vain as he would have however died soon", says the voice in a movie on the horrors of the regime which still attracts the Muscovites)

have become a symbol of tragic national regret more than monarchic nostalgia. It is not the monarch, the good, weak despot who is regretted, but the first one to be assassinated, shot with a revolver and stabbed by the cut-throats of the new-born Bolshevist power. The czar's death is thus considered today the first manifestation of the murderous intents of a regime which later was to use murder as a current practice of government.

In July, in the days when at the Kremlin the last dramatic congress of the Pcus was having place, not far from there an endless queue of crowd pressed the gates of the Manége. An immense personal display of the official painter Ilja Glazunov, who is very popular today, was having place. His great painting represented a kind of olographic apotheosis of the Russian amalgamation: Dostoevski, Lenin, Stalin and Nicholas II until Gorbachev were represented in different attitudes. In almost every painting, on the background of an apparently real-socialist composition, as a tormenting regret the bloodless mortuary and hemophiliac head of Czarevic Alexis was peeping.

Enzo Bettiza
Sept. 28th, 1990

In the tide change (An interview with Greece's Foreign Minister)

Kathimerini - *The crisis in the Gulf has made evident that the East-West rapprochement has simply shifted the threat to Western interests from the European theater to the periphery. In your opinion, what is Greece's strategic importance in the new security environment?*

Antonis Samaras - In the past, that is during the Cold War and the arms race, our strategic role was unquestionable. For Greece was circled by countries with different political philosophies and thus stood for the ideals of individual dignity and free-market economy. Today the setting has changed. The fall of communism and the inevitable turn of the Slavic countries toward the West is bringing about, beyond and above the crisis in the Gulf, a wider strategic reorientation which gives Greece the opportunity to turn its face away from the North—to the South and the East. Greece's rear is changing. It is no longer the Mediterranean but Greece's northern borders, because the changes in Eastern Europe have resulted in a shift from a geopolitical to a geoeconomic outlook. Besides, the crisis in the Gulf as well as the more general problem of the Middle East are closely connected with the geoeconomic position of the West. For Greece in particular there is an additional reason for this new political outlook: we are at the forefront of non-Islamic Europe. And our role in the West cannot fail to be determined decisively by this fact.

Kathimerini - *In the wake of the crisis in the Gulf, the USA and all Western European countries have openly acknowledged the upgrading of the strategic importance of Turkey, whose role as a peripheral power has significantly increased. How is it possible, in your view, to face this development?*

Antonis Samaras - The political leaders and top military chiefs of the entire world have always recognised Turkey's position. The map has not changed. It is just that current developments have highlighted Turkey's close proximity to Iraq. But let me add two things. First, the strategic importance of a country is not determined so much by its geographical position as is by its mentality. Second, the zero-sum game theory is not always true. One would be mistaken to believe that whoever gains something takes it from another. In any case no one can take away from Greece the fact that in the Gulf crisis we were needed immediately and substantially. The Europeans sent their ships to the Middle East by using our facilities in Crete and the Americans used our airspace. Thus we contributed substantially to the defence of the West. But, I repeat, the crisis in the Gulf has shown how important it is that we all understand that Greece's front line is now Crete. As long as Islam tends to act as a single political entity, non-Islamic Greece will retain its vital strategic position. From now on, it must be understood that Turkey's

importance will indeed greatly increase only if it co-operates closely with Greece, that is, only if it abandons its present tactics and adopts a radically new policy which will lead it out of isolation and enable it to utilise forces which at present inevitably remain inactive. Here it must be stressed that the substantial isolation of Turkey has not ended with the Gulf crisis. Because such isolation is not due to its geographical position but is founded in moral considerations. It is a kind of isolation which creates a specific mentality and behaviour. And it would be a big mistake to assume that this mentality and behaviour do not influence the political position and defence policies of all countries, including the great powers.

Kathimerini - *Despite all that, there is general agreement that the crisis in the Gulf, with the upgrading of Turkey's role, will have direct and negative consequences first of all on the Cyprus issue and in particular on the new round of intercommunal talks which should begin in September as well as on Cyprus' application for full membership to the European Community, which is going to be discussed on Sept. 17.*

Antonis Samaras - As far as the Cyprus problem is concerned, I must say that the events in the Gulf do favour the efforts to reach a solution. Not only because we can cite the obvious similarities between (the invasion of) Kuwait and Cyprus, but because the great powers have become even more aware of the need to solve the problems in the region, to which in the broad sense Cyprus belongs. The issue of Cyprus' application for full membership is another matter, because the European Community is obliged to observe the established procedures which were strictly applied to previous applications, such as those of Spain, Portugal

and even Turkey.

Kathimerini - *Even assuming one shares your optimism as far as the Cyprus problem is concerned, don't you believe that the pan-European recognition of Turkey's contribution in the defence of Western interests automatically upgrades Ankara's relations with the Community?*

Antonis Samaras - No, because the possibility of upgrading the relations between Ankara and the Community is unrelated to the events in the Gulf. Let me remind you the statement of the Twelve in Dublin in which such upgrading was explicitly linked with progress on the Cyprus problem. Besides, let's not forget the widely known double weakness which our neighbour has in its ties with the European Community, that is, violations of human rights and its unprepared economy.

Kathimerini - *Again, if one shares your optimism, wouldn't you concede that the upgrading of Turkey's role does endanger the 7:10 ratio (in US arms procurements to Athens and Ankara) or at least that this opens the way for Turkey's admission in the Western European Union?*

Antonis Samaras - Look! I am absolutely sure that the 7:10 ratio would immediately have been upset if the government had followed the short-sighted policy that Mr Andreas Papandreu proposed. If one does not participate in common efforts, alliances immediately cease as well. But you already know our position and the fact that it is recognised both by the US and by Europe.

With regard to the Western European Union, the decision (on Turkey's admission) clearly belongs to the nine member states. Both

Greece and Turkey have submitted applications to join the WEU and are participating in the current phase as observers. And naturally we enjoy the great advantage of our co-operation with those same nine countries in the EC.

Kathimerini - *What do you intend to do to counterbalance the advantage which Turkey has gained with the exclusion (from those negotiations) of a huge area along its south-eastern borders?*

Antonis Samaras - I do not deem appropriate to discuss our moves on this issue. Let me just say that the appearance of new defensive needs within the broader region of NATO's southern flank—revealed by the crisis in the Gulf—and the talks themselves in Vienna have created the preconditions for a re-evaluation of Greek positions in these negotiations for the limitation of conventional forces. Let me remind that the Greek government has not accepted the exception of the military port Mersina (from those negotiations). It is well known that as soon as I became Foreign Minister under the Zolota Government (Nov. 89), I have immediately faced this problem, as a matter of fact reversing the foolish policy of PASOK on this issue. I say foolish because the PASOK government in 1989 had accepted the exemption of a huge portion of the Turkish territory, equivalent to three times the size of Greece, from the reduction of conventional forces which are taking place in Vienna, without attempting to secure at least a counterweight which would guarantee a balance.

Kathimerini - *I would like to turn now to several issues related to the handling of the Gulf crisis by the Greek government. Personally, I find it difficult to understand*

why, despite the tragic similarities between the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, the government did not immediately side itself with the actions of the US and Great Britain. Is it perhaps that, even within today's government, there exists the same "dislike" for the US that was inaugurated in 1974 and that has since continued, at times in a latent way, at times—like with the Pasok government—in an overt way?

Antonis Samaras - The government showed neither hesitancy nor latent anti-Americanism. Simply, we do not follow a policy intended to impress public opinion. Before anybody else, even before the official declaration of the Twelve, we condemned the invasion. We collaborated with all the powers that showed direct interest in the restoration of morality justice and peace in the region. Or would you believe that it would have been wise for us to lead the way and send Greek forces to the Gulf even before other ships had the time to arrive there, and even before the Security Council had a chance to reach its final resolution?

Your question, however, leads me to raise the issue of what we might term the "political culture" of our people. Indeed there exists a latent dislike of our people toward our allies and partners, a dislike which is systematically cultivated by the the Socialist (PASOK) and Communist (KKE) parties, without regard for the huge cost of such a sickly attitude. The untenability of the opposition's policy, however, was exposed not simply by the decisions we took, but also by the fact that countries such as the USSR, China and the overwhelming majority of the Arab states made the same choice we made.

Kathimerini - *Let me go back to my*

previous question in a different way. For better or for worse, the government has given the impression of referring every major problem to the EC decisions. Do you have the impression that there is no reason for disagreement with the Community, or that Greece does not have special interests in the Near East and the Balkans, which not always are identical with the interests of the the EEC member states?

Antonis Samaras - You see that from the one side we are accused of latent dislike toward our Allies...and from the other we are accused of just following the decisions of the EC. Neither the first nor the second is happening. Simply stated, the Community had been pestered with Mr Papandreu's pointless obsession to raise all kinds of objections. We have the duty to promote our national interests—which to be sure do not always coincide with the interests of our partners. However, we promote them not with hysteria, but with responsible dialogue within a frame of collaboration in good faith. And most of all by telling always the truth. You must understand the special sensitivity of the Prime Minister, Mr Mitzotakis, who always wants us to get on with our partners in a responsible, sincere and honest way.

Kathimerini - *I would like to focus for a moment on the Balkans. The minorities issue has proved a troublesome one during the last few years and the recent CSCE conference in Copenhagen (on minorities, in August) has shown that non-existing minority issues will come up more and more frequently at international fora. Do you believe that even on this issue the EEC may offer a solution or rather that a new policy must be devised to face these new developments?*

Antonis Samaras - There is indeed an ever increasing concern, mainly among European countries, for minorities—ethnic, religious, linguistic and others.

It is a natural reaction of the Europeans who fear that the unification of Europe may lead to the disappearance of the peculiarities of each people and culture. Greece, naturally, has a special sensitivity on this matter. For we are determined to protect Hellenism, our religion, our language, and everything that constitutes our own identity. We are not afraid of discussions on minorities, for we have nothing to conceal. On the contrary, we do pursue such discussions, since the role of Greece in a United Europe will grow stronger out of concern for minorities. I should note, however—and thus I answer to your question about the Conference in Copenhagen—that the only minority in Greece is the Moslem minority of Western Thrace, which enjoys the same rights as the rest of the Greeks. In contrast, there are Greek minorities in other countries which are being persecuted and are suffering in a climate of fear, suppression and insecurity.

Kathimerini - *The hint of your last proposition is clear and gives me the opportunity to ask you how you are facing inter-Balkan co-operation, given the fact that lately a deterioration of Greece's relations with Yugoslavia and Albania has been observed.*

Antonis Samaras - I hope that our relations with Yugoslavia, despite the occasional clouds which affect them, will remain at their traditional friendly level. I also hope that the efforts being made in that country toward partitioning will be condemned. On the other hand, the Greek reaction to the issue of free road access (for Greek trucks) will remain

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unchanged. Because for a country such as Yugoslavia, which wants to upgrade its relations with the European Community, it is paradoxical, to say the least, to want at the same time to cut in two that same European Community. As it is equally incomprehensible, and in defiance of history, for one to believe that the Macedonian name can be appropriated by one slavic nation. Particularly so, when for centuries, that name has been a central and integral part of Greece's cultural heritage.

In our relations with Albania, what is of paramount importance is the issue of human rights for the Northern Epirotes. This is our main policy, a choice which, for that matter, has been fully vindicated by the recent dramatic events in the embassies in Tirana. The next Inter-Balkan Conference of Foreign Ministers will be held in Albania in October. Let's hope that by then we will have better news.

Kathimerini - *In closing, I would like to return to the crisis in the Gulf. According to many people, this crisis represents a manifestation of Islamic fundamentalism in terms of expansionism. If this holds true, then Greece becomes a zone of containment of this new threat to the West. Does the government judge it appropriate to strengthen its ties with the non-Islamic states of the region, Israel, Bulgaria, Russia and the other Christian republics of the USSR?*

Antonis Samaras - It is not easy to characterise the crisis in the Gulf as a

manifestation of Islamic fundamentalism, for the crisis has no religious dimension. It is a typical example of one country's expansionism at the expenses of its neighbors. It is precisely for this reason that the West's adversary in the present crisis is not Islam but one country, Iraq.

The crisis in the Gulf is acting as a loud warning signal which obliges us to face the following question: what would happen if we found ourselves facing an Islamic front? This is the critical issue. This worries the policy makers in the (Greek) Government as well as that of Europe and of the two superpowers. Clearly it is impossible to examine here the issue of Islam. However, let me repeat that this issue leads us (once again) to the notion that Greece's rear is no longer Crete but Macedonia.

Let me point out something else. It is more likely we will have a clash between fronts of developed and non-developed countries, or rich and poor nations, rather than between the West and Islam as two wholes. It is even more likely that there will be tension between economic zones or between regions with different lifestyles. That is what I inferred at the beginning of this conversation, when I spoke about a shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics. We find ourselves in an epoch in which the ideological, sociological and philosophical arguments are being replaced by economic and technological ones.

Kostantin Iordanidis
Sept. 2, 1990