

**ADDRESS**

**By**

**THE PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT OF PA.SO.K.**

**COSTAS SIMITIS**

**ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE THIRD PES CONGRESS**

**MALMÖ, 6 JUNE 1997**

## Europe in a World of Peace

Almost fifty-two years have elapsed since Europe became the theatre of a war which was the most inhuman and the most expensive in terms of human life of its history. And in those fifty-two years this continent has experienced hitherto unknown peaceful co-existence, progress and development which have re-established in this region of the earth a most remarkable economic, social and political prosperity.

Yet this general image of a peaceful and prosperous Europe which comes to mind when one's attention is mainly drawn to its western areas, is tarnished by numerous sources of discord, conflict and social instability which have emerged in recent years, particularly in its central and eastern regions. Their existence cannot presage anything good for the future since experience has shown beyond any shadow of a doubt that international peace and security are inextricably linked with the internal stability and social well-being of every country.

Furthermore, although Europe together with some other areas of the world, constitutes a relatively peaceful zone in a world which continues to be shaken by unsatisfied desires for change, it would certainly be wrong to believe that even these zones can preserve their balance and prosperity entirely unharmed for long when obliged to coexist with other parts of the world seeking deep changes and suffering from extreme economic inequalities and social injustice.

Let us have a closer look at the situation. The collapse of the socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe has deeply affected the artificial social stability which had been built up by their domestic regimes. As a result, new claims have been raised by large sections of the population which, as the case may be, have led to massive migration towards areas of greater prosperity, created internal conflicts and political instability, or lead to a total break with the past regimes. The latter tendency has led, in the name of national purity, to the dissolution of certain European States, often at a high cost in human life, and clearly constitutes the most fearful heritage of the past, given its possible consequences upon present and future peace. For it is a phenomenon which is still rife and one which seriously threatens the Balkans and certain areas of the former Soviet Union. Beneath the national

rhetoric, which is merely an ideological pretext, lie many real problems of a political, social and economic nature to which a solution is hoped to be found through the desperate venture of national isolation.

However, as already mentioned, social and political instability, increasing mobility and a frequent tendency to make a complete break with the past are to be observed in many other parts of the planet. The utter failure of authoritarian forces around the world to appease social upheaval and to improve living standards has resulted in repeated swings to extremist political regimes in Africa as well as in Asia. Civil war, guerrilla conflicts, the imposition of dictatorships inevitably lead to massive population movements, many of which end up in Europe.

Faced with these realities which have transformed the nature of conflicts and wars in a world-wide scale, peace in Europe constitutes an isolated and endangered species. If we Europeans wish to preserve and expand it, we must earnestly look into the real causes of this unfortunate state of affairs and work out viable and long-term solutions. We must seek ways of furthering the promotion of democratic principles and values in those states, particularly in Europe, suffering from political authoritarianism exercised by purportedly democratic regimes. We must endeavour to help economic development in countries where poverty, unemployment and the undervaluing of the quality of life undermine the social fabric and lead to mass exodus of refugees and criminality. We must see to it that cultural, religious, linguistic or other differences leading to discriminations are overcome, because their existence, combined with socio-economic inequalities, enhances the tendency for the unity of States to dissolve. It is true that we have already made a significant contribution to containing existing crises through the dispatch of peace-keeping forces to various parts of the world as well as through the development of international mechanisms ensuring the rapprochement among States, such as the one adopted a few days ago in Paris and which is designed to transform the relations between NATO and Russia. But we must also, and above all, search for the real causes behind the problems which in each case jeopardise peace and security in Europe and the rest of the world.

In Greece we are very well aware of the significance of the problem in Europe and in our immediate environment perhaps more aware than many other European countries, since we are situated right in the middle of the broad geographical area in which these problems occur with particular intensity. We

are among the first to feel the consequences of the frailty of peace in this region of the world at our northern and eastern borders, but also in the south, from which we are separated only by sea. In this region of the world political and social discontent is associated with the absence of well -defined and social structure within States and the scarcity of any prospects of improvement. In some cases, the gravity of such domestic problems leads to an aggressiveness of official State authorities towards their neighbours and to the upset of the international status quo. In some others, it leads to extensive emigration, much of which reaches our country.

Our experience of this situation has contributed to forging our belief -on which I addressed you some minutes ago- that international activity for peace in the world should not be limited to containing the symptoms, as it were, of the problems, as and when they occur, or to short-term solutions which lead only to a provisional suspension of conflicts or of the threat of conflicts. Nor should the international community offer financial aid if such aid is not coupled with specific proposals for the creation of the infrastructure necessary to its best possible use.

Greek peace policy in our region is increasingly planned on the basis of these diverse considerations. We participate of course in the peace forces in the Balkans, both in Bosnia and in Albania and help in the policing carried out there by the international community. We also offer financial assistance through the restricted means of our public sector, but also through private initiative, to the economic development of these areas. But at the same time we attach special importance to the strengthening of the infrastructures and institutions of the Balkans and particularly of our neighbours. A great deal which involves long-established situations and interests must change if democracy is to become an everyday reality, and if equality among people -irrespective of race, nationality, religion, sex or beliefs- is finally to prevail. We try to help as much as we can, both individually and through the organisations of which we are members, in this most difficult task which is, of course, mainly the task of the people of the Balkans themselves. Our success, but especially their success, in fulfilling it would heal the deep wounds of uncertainty and instability. Peace could then take roots in the Balkans, not as a provisional and precarious achievement artificially sustained, but as a permanent asset deriving from the very will of society and of its political organs.