

10 QUESTIONS FOR GEORGE PAPANDREOU

GREEK FOREIGN MINISTER GEORGE PAPANDREOU, SCION OF HIS COUNTRY'S most powerful political dynasty, is gearing up to lead the ruling socialist PASOK Party in the March 7 polls. To become Prime Minister, he must convince Greeks he can tackle social problems and orchestrate a successful Summer Olympics. TIME correspondent Anthee Carassava caught up with him in Athens.

THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE IS CONCERNED THAT THE MARCH 7 ELECTIONS COULD INTERFERE WITH PREPARATIONS FOR THE SUMMER GAMES. WILL THEY? I believe we've been able to make sure that—elections or no elections—the Games will go on. And we will be on time.

EVEN IF THERE IS A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT? Athens will be ready.

THESE ARE THE FIRST SUMMER GAMES SINCE SEPT. 11. ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT TERRORISM? Every big event now has a very different type of preparation as far as security is concerned. That's why we've invested massive time, people and resources into making this event secure.

DO YOU EXPECT TO SEE A SETTLEMENT ON CYPRUS SOON? I think there is a serious possibility because of Cyprus entering the E.U. [in May] and Turkey being assessed for possible membership in December. This could provide greater motivation for rapprochement and a solution under U.N. auspices.

WHEN WOULD YOU START ARMS-REDUCTION TALKS WITH TURKEY? Immediately following the March 7 elections. I think there is a great opportunity to create a peace dividend for both countries. If we have a balanced arms reduction, we

will use this money to invest in education and social welfare.

ARE YOU OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PROPOSED TALKS WITH TURKEY ON LAND, AIR AND SEA RIGHTS IN THE AEGEAN? We began exploratory talks and confidence-building measures some time ago to develop a sense of understanding and trust and to look for a way forward. We are moving in a positive direction, and more and more there is a sense that international law and the E.U. provide us with a route through

which to solve our disputes.

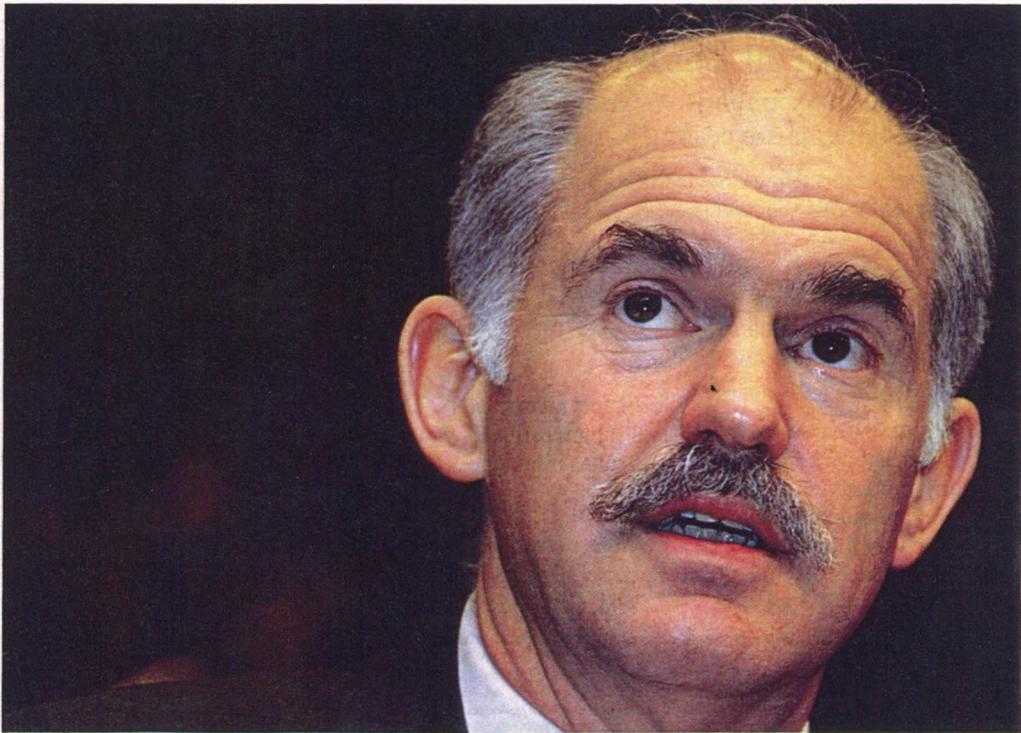
WHAT WILL YOUR PRIORITIES BE IF YOU BECOME PRIME MINISTER? The first focus would be on greater participation, greater decentralization, greater transparency. Secondly, we need to modernize our entire social-welfare system. Thirdly, my major priority is to make Greece a knowledge society. This means a huge transformation of our educational system.

YOU BEGAN YOUR CAMPAIGN BY APOLOGIZING FOR THE SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT'S

RECENT MISTAKES. WHY? I'm very proud of what the government has done. We focused on becoming part of the euro, developing infrastructure, strengthening the economy. However, there were other priorities that we did not address with the same vigor. What I'm saying now is, let's talk about fighting unemployment, fighting corruption and encouraging a participatory democracy.

IS ANTI-AMERICANISM STILL THRIVING IN GREECE? It has its peaks and valleys. Obviously, the war in Iraq was one of the peaks. Anti-Americanism [has to do] with U.S. policies and how people assess them.

IS IT A BURDEN BEING ANDREAS PAPANDREOU'S SON? I'm proud of my heritage. At the same time, each person carries his or her own identity. So one can be inspired by one's heritage, but at the same time review it. What I've tried to do is say, This is what I believe and this is what I will work for—as George Papandreou. ■



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