KOUNNAS FEST

A SYMPOSIUM

CELEBRATING THE 60TH BIRTHDAY OF COSTAS KOUNNAS

Dear Honorary guests and good friends from the academic, scientific, economic and social community of several European countries abroad as well as from the local community of Cyprus,

on behalf of the Organizing Institutions, University of Crete, École Normale Supérieure, CERN and the University of Cyprus, and in particular from the members of the Organizing Committee, Elias Kyritsis, Ignatios Antoniades, Costas Bachas, Nick Toumbas and myself, I would like to thank you all for coming here today to participate in this Symposium.

Today, we were all united to honor and celebrate with our contributions our very good friend, and colleague for most of us, Costas Kounnas, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, and to pay our respect to his innumerous and great achievements and contributions in the scientific endeavors of Physics, which is certainly considered by any standards as one of the most difficult research fields in the academic world. I would like to thank you for joining us to celebrate this together in the home country of Costas. I only wish that this celebration today could take place at the hometown of Costas, the beautiful city of Famagusta, where his home is still there waiting to be freed from the continuing Turkish invasion of 1974.

I would particularly like to note my warm welcome and express our thanks to all the foreign colleagues and collaborators of Costas, who travelled here today from their countries and, through their talks, they shared with us some of their experiences on interacting closely with Costas, getting influenced by Costas' high quality work as well as themselves influencing his work so that in the international bibliography we can now claim to have a spectacular continuity in a number of very important areas of Physics, such as Unification Theories, Gluons and Strong Interactions Physics, Supersymmetry, Strings, Supergravity and more. This interaction of Costas with his friends and colleagues that are here today, and many more that could not attend, is one of the most spectacular treasures we share with him and constitutes the real way how to achieve spectacular progress, not only in science, but in all aspects of our life.

Costas, as you all know, is a difficult person to persuade on many things, with a strong mind of his own, but at the same time also a very open, dynamic, lively and pleasant person to work with and interact with, both scientifically and socially. My mind goes back to the time when I was finishing-up my PhD at YALE University on probably the last

contradictory experimental result to the Standard Model, up to that point, a hyperon Σ^- Beta Decay reaction, and I got my hands, among other papers, to one of Costas early papers on weak interactions.

Our experiment finally resolved the earlier puzzle that, if confirmed, would otherwise correspond to nature's interactions dominated by right handed currents instead of left handed, but nevertheless Costas paper did help me to put my thesis theory section into a good perspective. I was also informed at that time that he was of Cypriot Origin, like myself, so when I returned back to Europe to work for ETH Zurich for the L3 Experiment, I was anxious to meet him and headed towards his office at CERN to meet him.

To be honest, I was expecting to see a conservative, father-like figure - well I didn't know him personally at that time - and I was kind of reserved. Not that with his character and personality he doesn't exhibit a father figure, but nevertheless all this expectation of mine changed very fast:

I met instead the passionate and youth-like person he is in all aspects of his life. Oh yes, Costas maybe stubborn and carrying still his youth dreams, some of them difficult to fulfill, but he is a very lively, several times loud and full of life person, who, as I discovered shortly, doesn't compromise with defeat and doesn't want to allow any injustice, as he perceives it, to enter into his world and judgment. He is a father-figure in this sense, but without the mafia element of Scorsese.

Myself, also half a Cypriot and half from mainland Greece, like Costas, and coming from a known island of proud and stubborn people in the Adriatic Sea, Cephalonia, the Kingdom of Odysseus, who helped the ancient Greeks to finally overtake Troy after 10 bloody but unsuccessful years of war, I really thought that I can be considered stubborn, and I am stubborn.

Well, I can now say for sure that I found my Master (Mastro we say in Cyprus) in Costas. Whatever he thinks it needs to be done, he will insist and give his best efforts to that, and finally he will manage to do it. This is an example for the young generation not to surrender with the first problems they encounter and to struggle hard for their dreams and for their visions to come true. To make it come true. This is an example to follow for the Economic Crisis we go through these days in Cyprus and for the situation that our little island faces through the long military occupation by Turkey. This is a stand of life itself that one can only admire and if Costas says we will go back home to Ammochostos – Famagusta - then undoubtedly we will at some day, free and with all our dignity.

I recall all the persistence we both showed together with Costas, against all odds and demons, to manage to bring Cyprus join CERN. Finally, next week this will become a reality after a long-long time, since 1992, when this University came into existence from scratch. The General Director of CERN Rolf Heuer is coming to Cyprus to sign the corresponding agreement with our Government. Despite all the problems we faced together with Costas, political, scientific and economic, we finally can do it. The contribution of Costas to transform this vision of ours to reality was very decisive and I personally thank him for that. The new generations I am sure will do the same, as it brings new European oxygen, a real oxygen, and new opportunities for science and international scientific spirit to our little island.

Unfortunately, this persistence of Costas goes with his character and extends also to a bad habit of his, smoking. I remember so many times discussing lively with him and a few other friends like Nick over a dinner, and returning early hours back home, almost always after the restaurants would politely “close” for the night, instead of kicking-us out, that my clothes had to be de-cigaretted, as they were stinking smoke. A lot of smoke! How many times did I pressed him to quit smoking, for his own good, maybe a little bit for our own good as well, but he doesn’t listen. And he smoked a lot, like a Chimney!!

So, if there would be a Protocol coming out of this Symposium for signatures, it should certainly contain one Article with the sentence: COUNNAS, as one of the Collaborating parties of this Protocol, promises to contribute to the Society’s health, by quitting smoking. And he should be forced to sign it. Unless he comes up with this….

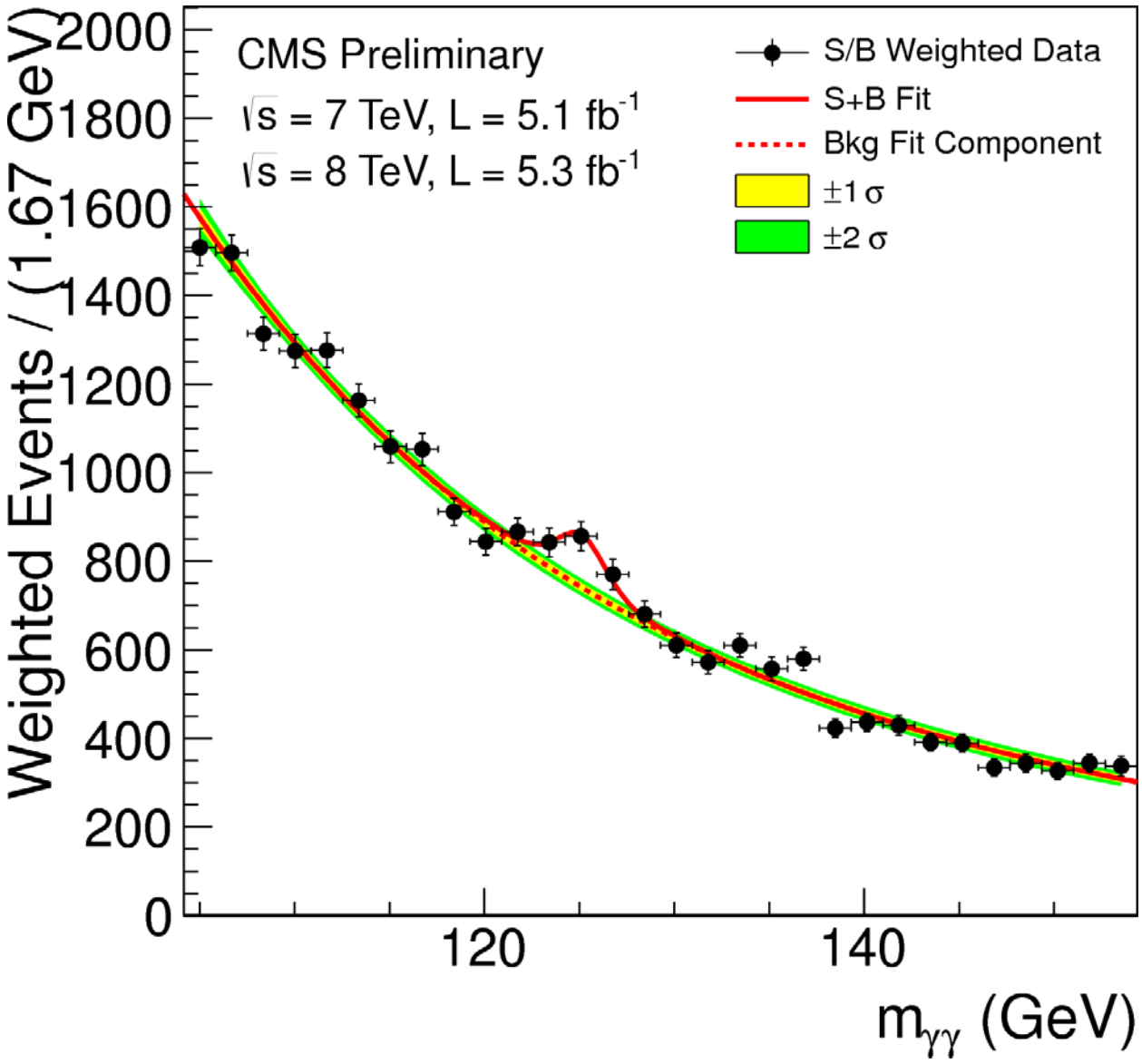
As far as Costas' very important contributions to Physics, and in particular Theoretical Physics, I will not have to say much. Most of you have nicely covered the subject through your very interesting talks to different areas and ideas pointing back to Costas published work and papers in the mathematics of Supersymmetry, Strings, Supergravity etc.

On the other hand, many of you do not know that Costas is also a great Cook, or, as we say, «ΨΗΣΤΗΣ». This is a Greek word, meaning somebody who can cook a real nice meal based on all kind of meat on the charcoal. Quite delicious, we will have some during the night at the Taverna in a couple of hours, but I can assure you it has no comparison over Costas secrets how to cook it right and tender, feed a whole army with that and being a wonderful and very hospitable host for his guests.

And, certainly, very-very few of you know that Costas can dance well the "TATSIA", a traditional Cypriot dance where the dancer swirls around his body a sieve with one or more glasses full of water. One really needs to solve difficult differential equations to describe the equation of motion of the system: oscillations, gyroscope, precession, transition, nutation... I am sure that for our famous physicists in the audience this is a piece of cake to do, at least theoretically. Practically, however, it's a different story. I wouldn't like to sit close to one of those guys, nobody knows what happens.

With Costas it's a different story, I have seen him dance the TATSIA when we hosted with my group at this University the CMS Week in Cyprus, back in 2008. The proof is here, you can see it in the photo…

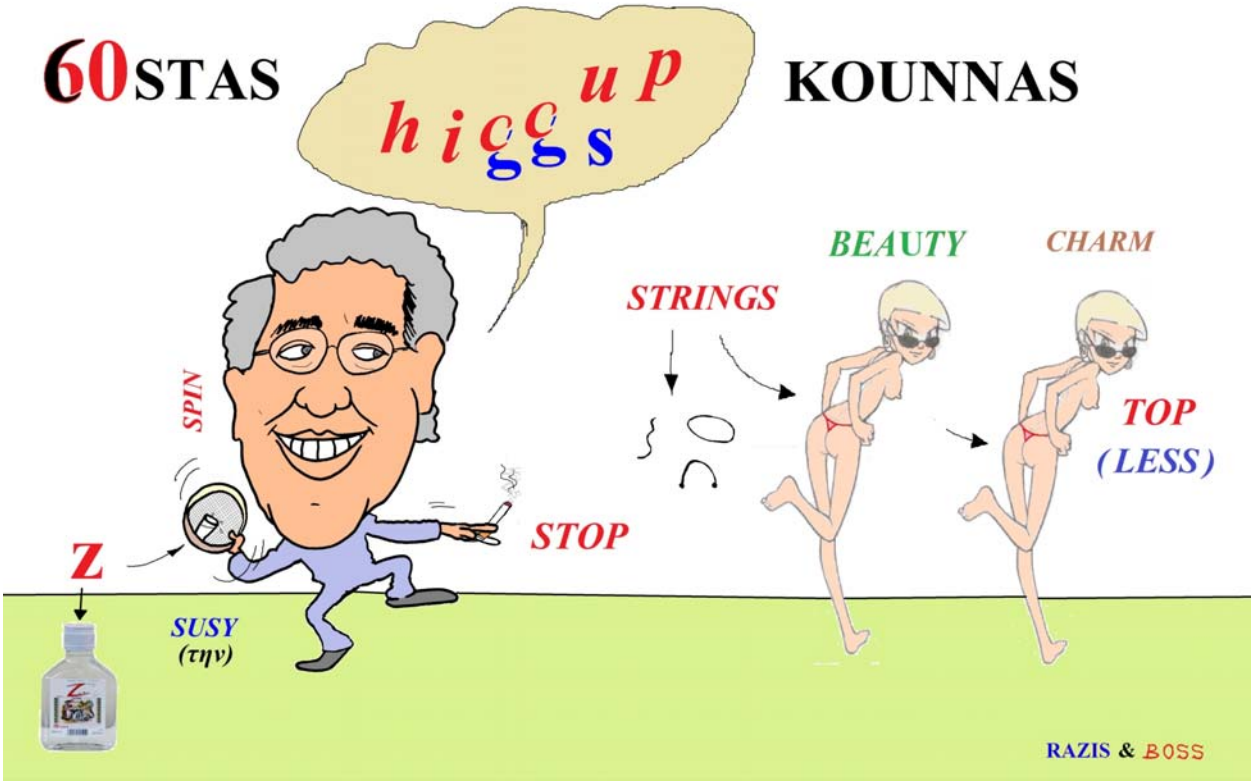
and even more, look where this hard work lead us later…..to the discovery of the Higgs Boson...



Unfortunately, at the TAVERNA tonight it's going to be difficult to have Costas dance the TATSIA, as he recently had an operation on his leg.

Whatever the case and strong correlation might be with the TATSIA and any possible emerging discovery by the Symposium participants gathered here, with so much brain collectively interfering, we will renew our appointment for the 70th birthday of Costas. By then he certainly promises to have cut smoking and to dance again the TATSIA for us. Then who knows, we might get lucky and with so many hiccups from the Z (not the intermediate vector boson, but Z for Zivania, the famous. Cypriot schnapps), and quarks

and spins and beauties and top and stop, we might discover the strings, like you see in the photo up there…



Dear Friends and Colleagues and other participants, humor is a very useful element for all hard working people like physicists, it is a very basic ingredient that keeps us happy, united and devoted to our great vision to understand and explain life and the big picture we call our Universe.

But before we close this Symposium, let's offer some flowers and a gift to our dear friend Costas, to remember this reunion here in Cyprus, triggered by his 60th birthday, and lets wish him XRONIA POLLA, all the best with his family and a continuing success with his new physics ideas to come. ΧΡΟΝΙΑ ΠΟΛΛΑ Costas.

We will see each other again later, at 20:30, at the taverna Plaka.