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Greece

1973-2023, the Athens Polytechnic students' revolt "is not a museum piece"!

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On 17 November 1973, a tank belonging to the colonels' junta smashed the entrance gate to the Polytechnic University in Athens, crushing the students who had mobilised en masse and setting off a massacre in and around the university.

A year later, the US-backed junta fell, and every year since, massive mobilizations have celebrated this revolt. In recent years, the right, in which former junta henchmen participate, has tried to smear and forget this historic act, whose character, as anti-fascist journalist Dimitris Psarras points out in *EF Syn*, is "a revolt linking the spontaneous explosion of youth with the organized action of left-wing groups against the dictatorship".

"Education, bread and freedom"

Even today, this is one of the greatest fears of the right-wing government, because the slogan of the time "Education, bread, freedom" remains more relevant than ever. In the demonstrations this year, young people denounced the privatization and exclusion measures in education, and the policy of misery and unemployment. They also denounced the violent repression by the Mitsotakis police, not only against the demonstrations (for example, with the destruction of Exárcheia Square, a symbol of resistance), but also against young people in general. This week, the police once again killed a young Roma man and beat up several young people.

All of these incidents have fuelled the anger of young people against a government that has been very badly elected (one in five voters) and that is trying to pretend otherwise in order to impose its dirty measures. Hence the importance of this year's 17 November, prepared for by several meetings to debate the link between 1973 and 2023. And so, on the 17th, a large number of demonstrations took place across the country, with anti-fascist and anti-repression slogans as their main slogans, and as always an anti-imperialist dynamic which, this year, took the form of massive support for the Palestinian people, particularly on the banners and by carrying hundreds of Palestinian flags.

A dynamic social movement and the absence of a credible left-wing perspective

In Athens, the 30,000-strong demonstration, made up of student, radical and revolutionary left-wing and KKE (Greek Communist Party) cortes, marched as far as the American embassy, with many continuing on to the Israeli embassy. At the head of the procession, behind a huge Palestinian flag, were students from Polytechnique, including several soldiers in uniform, to remind everyone of the importance of resisting recruitment. In Thessaloniki and Patras, the processions were massive and anti-imperialist in character, inevitably turned against US policy because of local history and US support for Netanyahu.

What was missing, however, was a denunciation of Russian imperialism, its terrible war of aggression against the Ukrainian people and its dirty role in particular in providing barely disguised support for fascist movements. This goes back to the history of the Greek left, marked by Stalinism and campism, but also, at the time, by strong disorientation and sectarianism, with some rejoicing at the break-up of Syriza (with a "leader" who has no left-wing credentials and is a grand inquisitor), which has added to the very scattered landscape of the Greek left. In this sense, 17 November illustrates the paradox of a very dynamic social movement and a lack of credible prospects on the left, which makes

initiatives for dialogue and recomposition very urgent.

Athens, 18 November 2023

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