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Greece

In Greece, anger rises against the government of money, cops and free riding

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More than a year and a half after his return to power, the ultraliberal right-wing Kyriakos Mitsotakis, whose only recognized competence is to be the son of a historic right-wing leader, is beginning to be challenged. His period of “government of the best”, a theme on which the media at his command glorified him, seems to be over. Popular anger is swelling against a whole series of measures and provocations by this government of cronies and crooks.

Fire on the public education service

The most massive protests in recent weeks have concerned education, with, of course, the very strong mobilizations of the whole university world, supported by the workers' movement, against the law breaking up the university and police control of students. Unsurprisingly, the law was passed last week by 166 votes to 132, with the right-wing deputies being reinforced by the small group *Elliniki Lysi* (Greek Solution), the Nazi successor to *Chryssi Avgi* (Golden Dawn). The real surprise was the strength of the demonstrations, including those on Wednesday and Thursday, the voting day. This was a challenge to the dictates of the Minister of the Interior. The flagship measure of the law is the creation of an expensive police force in the universities, and if one has the slightest doubt about their announced peaceful nature, one only has to see the violence with which the MATs (Greek riot police) hit the demonstrators to have no doubt about the government's intentions. To Tsipras, which was protesting against the creation of this body, Mitsotakis dared to reply: “It's not the police that we are introducing into the university, it's democracy.”

In the French press this measure is a bit emotional, except in *Ouest-France*, which has managed to find an obscure professor who says all the good things he thinks about cops in universities. While the vast majority of the academic world is standing against this (ruinous) creation worthy of dictatorships (admired by some members of this regime) and even one of the most famous rightwing academics famous for having made the cops intervene against the students of the Athens law school is clearly against this measure!

On the other hand, the articles in the French press forget the substance of the reform: as has been explained, it is the whole relatively open system of the Greek university which is broken with the law voted, excluding thousands of law students from studying law and favouring private companies, whose bosses are friends of the government. It is against this break-up of the university that there have been mobilizations that will continue. For many of them, the ministers in charge, children of the bourgeoisie who have never set foot in a public school or a Greek university, have a clearly assumed objective: they want to break the national education system from kindergarten to university, to hand it over to their friends in power, and in the wake of the university law, Minister Kerameos is preparing a law on the autonomy and decentralization of the school system, obviously cut off from any pedagogical concern. The objective would simply be for the schools to impose their self-financing, with an appeal to local sponsors, by making them dependent on local institutions from an administrative and programmatic point of view, basically offering them to the needs of local employers, with local recruitment of staff... Blanquer [French minister of education] beaten on his own ground by ideologues who are madly in favour of the commodification of schools and the enslavement of their staff. Rich mobilizations in perspective...

Incompetence in power

But education is not the only area where anger is expressed. Faced with the pandemic, this government is demonstrating a rare incompetence. While in the spring, Greece had been relatively spared, since the end of the summer (not thanks to good management as the media claim, but thanks to a lesser effect of the virus in all the Balkans), the epidemic is now hitting hard.

Instead of responding to the demands of recruiting healthcare staff - there is a shortage of thousands of doctors in hospitals and health centres - the right has decided to cut the health budget. This at a time when the army's budget is rising sharply and it is spending 2.5 billion on 18 Rafale... What's more, the measures taken exasperate more and more people: as soon as they reopen, the shops have to close down abruptly. The schools had remained open, then the middle schools reopened for a week - but not the high schools - and for a few days now, all the establishments have been closed, without the requirement of 15 maximum per class being met (in the cities, the number of pupils can reach thirty with often poorly designed classrooms). As a bonus, the misnamed "New Democracy" of Mitsotakis offers itself increasingly shocking privileges: while vaccination is at a standstill, we have seen right-wing executives arrive in their big sedans to be vaccinated without any rights, and the Prime Minister himself is multiplying what he does not even realise are provocations: while a hiking guide who organized an excursion with participants several hundred metres apart receives a fine of 5,000 euros, Mitsotakis gets his photo taken in the mountains with other cyclists not wearing masks and eats with dozens of companions in the house of a deputy on the island of Icaria. Balance sheet in Icaria: popular booing, which the friendly TVs tried to hide, while Minister Vouridis (former secretary of youth of the junta of colonels ...) explained that the Icarians wanted to express their love for the Prime Minister and that's why they invited him to come and eat ... This gives an idea of the political level under this "new democracy".

Repression and the support of the extreme right as the only supports

Devoid of any political strategy as the crisis deepens in the country, this regime believes it can make its credibility depend above all on the propaganda asserted by the vast majority of the media owned by its rich pals, but even if the brain-washing operation is massive, cracks are appearing in the big bourgeois press: dismissal of an editor-in-chief for a critical opinion, resignation of another, both very well known. With a prime minister who has placed the public broadcaster ERT under his direct control, this regime seems to have only one fear: seeing popular opposition develop and challenge his power. So its main response is repression, which is why the government is now ranked among the "flawed democracies" in the ranking of *The Economist* magazine. And of course, this is accompanied by a racist policy towards refugees and winks supported by the extreme right: on the one hand, the political prisoner Dimitris Koufodinas is being refused return to the prison from which he was removed and confined for no reason in another; on the other hand, the Nazi criminals Pappas and Lagos are at liberty and Papavassiliou, sentenced to six years in prison, has seen his request for release satisfied after four months in prison ...

Another proof of authoritarianism reminiscent of the fascist junta of the colonels (1967-1974): in the bill on the university was hidden an article attempting to criminalize song lyrics that could be assimilated to a praise of terrorism... Rage and laughter on the part of the artists, the slightest song could have lyrics of such suspicion! As a result, hundreds of singers, both known and unknown, were mobilized, and the government was forced to withdraw the article, which was a major victory and proves that it is possible to win against this government. Thus, the fact alone of having held banned demonstrations with thousands of demonstrators against the university law is in itself a great victory, which gives some punch for the future.

What next? On the right, cracks are beginning to appear, on the one hand with the most nationalist currents (the former Prime Minister Antonis Samaras), on the other with the old Caramanlist right, which is worried about the Organization of power and its consequences, even if only the radicalization of the mass movement in the face of this anti-democratic regime. Unfortunately, even if the newspaper of NAR, the main organisation of the anti-capitalist left,

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headlines that the days of this government are numbered, the perspectives on the left are for the moment blocked, which reinforces the role of the mass movement and should push the radical and revolutionary left to come out of its reflexes of self-affirmation, which are of little use in offering credible perspectives on the left. Let's go left!

Athens, 16 February 2021

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