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Greece

Pushing back Mitsotakis and the far right

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The Greek right, which has always emphasized that the government of Syriza could only be a parenthesis, therefore took over the reins of power in July 2019 without being able to hide its deep joy at inflicting a deep defeat on the left. By insolently relying on an extreme right-wing current ranging from the former fascist “axe-killer” Voridis, who has become Minister of Agricultural Development, to the nationalist current of the former extreme neoliberal Prime Minister Samaras, Mitsotakis immediately wanted to take all the reins of power, without worrying about the quality of the minions to whom he entrusted responsibilities: the result is a head of the secret services who lied about his diplomas, ditto for the soldier to whom he has just entrusted the responsibility of the “management” of refugees, a racist nationalist who dreams only of concentration camps. To tourism, he appointed a known speculator and admirer of the colonels’ junta - a great image for the tourist profile.

The list is long, and every day the independent press uncovers procedural flaws, shameless lies, which are the real face of what Mitsotakis touts as the “government of the best”, a ridiculous slogan relayed by a media mainly under the orders of New Democracy and the employers, which the government wishes to reward by discreetly granting subsidies, including to gutter newspapers and the racist and scandalous press!

And at the end of this year, while the right is preparing a budget obviously only favourable to the employers, what mobilizes more and more widely is above all the countless and very disturbing attacks against democratic rights and elementary justice. We will note three examples on which mobilizations are taking place these days which only ask to gain momentum... if we know (finally!) how to give ourselves the means.

The indecency of a prosecutor favourable to the criminal group Chryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn)

It is so huge that *le Monde* devoted an article to it: after months of testimonies and the evidence which has accumulated on the pyramidal structure and the decisive role of the Führer of Chryssi Avgi, the prosecutor, Adantia Ikonou, has just asked for the release of its leadership, blaming the murder of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas on a sole killer, Roupakias! Basically, nothing surprising: on the one hand, the behaviour of this prosecutor during the whole trial consisted in trying to contradict the anti-fascist witnesses and questioning the real evidence (well, there was a blade, but you can't say it was a knife, and so on), as if this group had not been responsible for deaths and dozens more serious injuries. But this contempt for the victims would certainly not have been able to lead to such a request for release if there was not a fundamental tendency of the right to be able to put the Nazis back in the saddle, certainly in forms which could be a little different, but which agrees perfectly with the nauseating discourse of the current leaders of this old right from the civil war.

Even if, of course, the trial is not over and nothing is done, the danger of a release now exists, with the bonus the reimbursement of all sums suspended for former parliamentarians of Chryssi Avgi, who would thus become immensely rich whereas in recent months the organization has been gradually closing its premises under the pressure of local mobilizations and financial difficulties. Calls for mobilization were launched with about 2000 people attending a rally on December 21 in the centre of Athens, called by anti-fascist organizations (Keerfa) and the revolutionary and radical left (NAR, SEK and so on), but not by Syriza or the KKE. Certainly an encouraging first step, with Petros Konstantinou (Keerfa) recalling that the prosecutor who had “cleared” the assassins of the left

deputy Lambrakis (1963, the basis for the book by Vassilikos and the film by Kosta Gavras, Z) then became a minister in the fascist junta (1967-1974). But the fact that this gathering then left in two different demonstrations makes it clear we are still far from the broadest unity of anti-fascist action, which is becoming urgent!

A police force trampling on democratic rights

We talked about it in the summer: one of the main axes, even obsessions, of the Mitsotakis program, is an asserted, violent and lasting attack against democratic rights, civil rights, workers' rights, university freedoms and so on. To this end, a Greek Castaner was appointed: the former Socialist Prime Minister of the pro-Troika right-Pasok government, Chryssochoidis, shamelessly claiming the right to police violence, which he systematically denies, even in the face of accumulated filmed testimonies. And the security slogan of the right, "law and order", recalls very dark times.

In fact, between the continuous program of evictions from occupied places (in Exarcheia, operations continue, despite some mobilizations that are poorly supported) and interventions in universities (as in Asoee, a university of economics where the students have also repelled the cops!), total freedom has been granted to the police to control who they want, when they want, as they want. The list of their abuses is growing day by day, the last two are exemplary: in the first, police officers from the Omonia Square police station had fun torturing a disabled person, and the case attracted so much publicity that the torturers in uniform were arrested. Then, in an eviction operation in the Koukaki district, in order to reach the occupied house, the commandos simply passed through the neighbouring house, stripping and striking the owner who refused to let them pass by his terrace without judicial authorization. The affair caused a stir, especially since the victim is a well-known filmmaker ... and not a leftist!

Faced with this climate which brings the Greek government closer to those of Orban and Bolsonaro, a diverse mobilization is beginning to emerge: even MEPs (Social Democrats, Greens, Eurogroup of the left) have written to Mitsotakis to denounce this challenge to the very meaning of the rule of law. It is urgent that at the international level, the desired image of a "centre right" government is called into question to show the drift to the far right of this government, and the international workers' movement has a crucial role to play. On the ground, the mobilization begins to organize, but here again, it is largely insufficient: recently, a unitary meeting was attended only by the radical and revolutionary left, the KKE and Syriza being conspicuous in their absence. However, a unitary campaign must henceforth be launched with a precise objective: faced with all Chryssochoidis's cover-ups, his resignation is a minimum demand, and we can think that winning such a battle would be a serious weakening factor for the right in power, as it is based on the repression of rights: its objective now is not only the limitation of demonstrations, but outright restriction of the right to strike.

Thessaloniki Metro: against the destructive plans of the Taliban of Koullis!

The battle for rights also involves the defence of an archaeological site which is likely to be destroyed by the will of a right wing concerned solely with profits. During the construction of a metro line in Thessaloniki, a city that has been a large centre of population since its foundation in the fourth century BC, very important Byzantine remains were uncovered, a discovery hailed by the international archaeological community: archaeologists, the former mayor of the city and the metro construction company then agreed to take the time necessary to consolidate the site and build the metro station around these vestiges, as has been done on other occasions in Athens, making some Athenian stations living museums! Facing them, an alliance of reactionary and economic interests favoured exhibiting the remains in a military museum! However, during his speech at the international fair in Thessaloniki, Prime Minister

Mitsotakis, known by the nickname of Koulis, and not best known for his cultural openness, announced without the archaeological authorities being informed that the remains would be removed and “replaced” once the station was ready!

The scientific community was astounded by the prospect of such a massacre, contrary to all scientific recommendations. The reasons: a time saving of three years, therefore very substantial savings. But also, without any doubt, the spirit for revenge of this unbridled right, which would thus avenge the humiliation done to its former chief Samaras when the latter had wanted to make believe, within the framework of his nationalist policy, that he had discovered in Macedonia (Greek, of course!) the tomb of Alexander the Great! And we have seen in recent weeks the management of the Ministry of Culture terrorizing the members of the Central Archaeological Council (KAS) ... who ended up voting for this solution, worthy of the Taliban decapitating the statues!

Faced with this measure, a reflection of a cultural conception which sees archaeological discoveries as an opportunity to open a Disneyland, inhabitants of Thessaloniki, associations for the defence of the natural and historic environment, the National Syndicate of Archaeologists and many scientists around the world have mobilized to make the government reverse this catastrophic decision. In the current context, this battle should especially not be considered as secondary or “picturesque”: its cultural and political significance is of the highest, and international support is also essential!

So if 2019 ends without the workers’ movement, hit hard by the policy of the Syriza government then knocked out by the victory of the right, being able to relaunch itself again in great mobilizations, the current battles for the respect of basic democratic rights, workers’ rights, respect for the natural environment (there are battles also against the installation of giant wind farms on mountains and so on) and history can and must help to restore confidence in mass struggles - the only way to start rolling back the Greek Taliban right!

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