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Greece

Sources and Dynamics of the Revolt

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Even though it dates from a month ago, this document of the Greek section of the Fourth International remains very topical: first of all, because it gives an eye-witness description of the formidable Greek youth movement, adding a political analysis that is essential if we do not want to remain about at the stage of the “youthism” that we have seen in quite a few publications over the last few weeks; then, because in this mid-January, the movement, which no longer takes the form it did during its first week, is starting up again, with demonstrations over education and also in solidarity with the Palestinian people, although we can obviously not foresee how it will evolve.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/300px-GreekRiotMontage.jpg>]

Clockwise, from top left: riot police face protesters; police move in to contain rioting civilians; a protester defies police; burned-out vans; an abandoned barricade; and protesters retreat from tear gas

Document adopted by the Central Committee, OKDE-SPARTAKOS in mid-December 2008.

Introduction

There is one notable difference: although the perspectives that are outlined in the document are more valid than ever (the reshuffle carried out a week ago by the right-wing government does not at all change the profound crisis that it is), a welcome development has taken place. In fact, the movement has produced an electric shock on the far left, by accelerating its understanding of its deficiencies and thus of the need to move into a higher gear in order to build an anti-capitalist left worthy of the name!

The sources of the revolt

The explosion of recent days has its roots in the social discontent that has accumulated over the last few years and it represents the continuation, and not only in a chronological sense, of the mobilizations in the universities and the big strikes and demonstrations in defence of social security.

The unleashing of the “youth storm” took place in a conjuncture marked both by generalized anger against the government of the New Democracy (ND) and by the “objective” dead end that the workers’ movement found itself in. Indeed, the retreat that the trade-union bureaucracy and the leaderships of the parties of the parliamentary opposition (PASOK, KKE, Synaspismos-Syriza) [1] carried out at the time of the adoption of the reform of social security by the ND government last spring really blunted the combativeness that the workers had shown up until then. Social democracy really did put off the mobilisations until the (Greek) calends, in order to launch into a long pre-electoral phase. [2]

By channelling social protest towards the ballot box, the reformists at that time allowed the government to continue its offensive (privatizations). However, at a point where the Greek economy had been sucked into the world crisis and where the government of Kostas Karamanlis was mired in scandals, the rampant malaise was beginning to demand means of expressing itself. A willingness to take radical action could be perceived a few weeks before the youth revolt, in the unprecedented movement among prisoners, who started a hunger strike to improve their intolerable conditions of detention, and in the wave of solidarity with their struggle that was organized around the prisons.

Identical tendencies appeared in the form of struggle decided on by the workers of companies which closed down (the occupation of ALTEC). Nor should we forget the peasant mobilizations that took place in November-December.

On the other hand, even though it is on a very small scale, we have seen some acts of racism, which are characteristic of sharpening social contradictions, and the target of course was immigrants in districts which are losing their bourgeois character (in Patras; in Athens, the district of Aghios Pandelémonas).

The outburst of anger by the youth, who represent the barometer of the state of mind of society, against police violence, played the role of a valve, by releasing the powerful latent social tension. The assassination in the Athenian district of Exarcheia of the young Alexis Grigoropoulos, 15 years old, was the spark, but not the cause. It is obvious that the entire working class and popular layers had reached the point of rupture with the ND. The working class, student and high-school youth, and the peasants are all, armed by their mobilizations over the last two years, in a situation of confrontation with the liberal policies of the Karamanlis government.

However, the youth revolt does not only reflect this social discontent: it has its own particular characteristics.

The nights of the barricades

On Saturday December 6, the news of the assassination of Alexis struck like a thunderbolt just after 9 p.m. Faced with the police provocation, sectors of the revolutionary left were ready to respond. On Exarcheia Square, it was especially the anarchist milieu [\[3\]](#)

that gathered, setting up barricades in the surrounding streets with the help of burning dustbins and confronting the police. And they “barricaded” themselves in the neighbouring buildings of the Polytechnic School. The far left assembled its forces nearby, in Harilaos Trikoupi Street. Having set up barricades, they confronted the special repressive corps and tried to leave there in a demonstration towards the centre of the city, succeeding in occupying the Faculty of Law. A third block of demonstrators, made up of members of Diktyo (“the Network”) and of the youth of Synaspismos tried to take a demonstration to Omonoia Square. After an agreement among the organisations of the anti-capitalist left, it was decided to organise the following day, Sunday, a demonstration to the police headquarter in Attica. The Syriza coalition decided to take part in this demonstration.

During this first night of barricades, it was approximately 2000 people, mostly militants of anarchist groups and of the far left, who clashed for hours with the police. Similar confrontations took place in Salonica.

At midday on Sunday, approximately 10,000 people marched in a demonstration towards the police headquarter, with the participation of the far left and of Syriza. On both sides of the demonstration, there was a massive presence of the anarchists, who very much wanted to have a confrontation with the police. Police using tear gas broke into the demonstration before it reached their headquarters. With their Molotov cocktails, the anarchists set fire to banks, new car salerooms and the entrances to ministries. The far left reformed its ranks and led the demonstration towards Parliament, whereas Syriza dispersed. During the night, there were running battles in the streets of Exarcheia and the neighbouring districts, with the Polytechnic School as the bastion of the anarchists [\[4\]](#) and the Faculty of Law for the a far left. A new demonstration was decided on for Monday at 6 p.m.

Syriza hesitated: it made its political support known, while remaining as far as possible from the scene of the confrontations. The KKE was absent. A delegation of its leadership made a protest at the police headquarter. However, under the effect of the social movement, it announced for Monday that it would demonstrate, but on its

own, in Omonoia Square, at a good distance from everyone else! So, during this weekend, the immediate response in terms of mobilization against the state and the government came above all from the revolutionary groups, anarchist and far-left. The barricades represented a “general rehearsal” and served as an example for the masses of student youth who were about to take to the streets, heading as of Monday morning towards forms of confrontation.

On its side, the government avoided repeating what it had said in the first few hours, following police sources, namely that the police assassin had acted in a situation of self-defence. It then adopted a passive attitude, confining itself to pushing back and containing the “troubles”. This attitude can be explained by the worsening situation and the rising social tension in which it found itself.

Flames of youth

From Monday, students demonstrated all over the country, laying siege to police stations! They were inspired by the examples of the two previous days, but they also remembered the recent experience of the militant student movement and the big mobilizations for social security. And over the last couple of years, we also had movements, less broad in scope, of occupations of high schools. Starting from this experience, the student mobilization was impressive, unprecedented, impetuous. Alexis Grigoropoulos was one of them. The mass character of the movement and its readiness to engage in confrontation were not controlled or led by any political organization or current. The political forces were quite simply overtaken! On Monday evening, tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Athens to make their voices heard. You could see there, apart from the members of political organizations, whole families, with the older generations, and the new ones who were already becoming politicised. However, the social force which set the tone was the mass of young people, above all the student youth, which, without having any organized links with the anarchist groups, adopted their methods without ever having had any experience of them. Groups of university and high-school students, from different social backgrounds, from all the popular suburbs, Greeks and immigrants, set fire – in the literal sense of the term, without exaggeration - to the centre of Athens. The confrontations with the police were the sharpest that had taken place since the 1970s, and the extent of the damage was unprecedented. The demonstration divided into several parts, so that the police were unable to disperse it, in spite of continuous volleys of teargas grenades. Groups of young people blocked the special police units by incessant stone-throwing in all the main thoroughfares and side streets of the centre of Athens. At the same time, the demonstration the KKE had organised set off, after an agreement with the police, in a direction far from the theatre of confrontation... There was a similar situation in dozens of towns and cities in the country.

Political crisis

When this night was over, the political crisis which struck the right-wing government reached its paroxysm. Repeating what the government itself said, we can say that “law, order and security were dissolved”, in the capital and in other towns and cities, large and small. The next day, the Prime Minister had an urgent meeting with the President of the Republic and the leaders of the political parties, calling for “national unity”. The government issued threats: “reduce the violence or else there will be a state of emergency”. The far-right party Laos and the KKE lined up with the government. The KKE attacked Syriza, saying that it was “caressing the ears of the hooded ones”. [5] PASOK, the largest opposition party, called for elections but also demanded that young people “show some moderation”, condemning violence and calling for peaceful forms of protest. Syriza was the only parliamentary party that called from the beginning for the government to resign. But under the pressure of the political system, it began to distance itself increasingly as the days went by from the “violent character” of the movement.

On Tuesday 9 a massive student demonstration, which set off in the middle of the day, was repressed by the police,

and there were confrontations, on a smaller scale than the day before, which lasted until the evening. The government decided to take a harder line and gave the green light for ferocious repression. At the same time, the situation was becoming complicated, since the trade-union organizations had some time previously fixed for the following day a 24-hour general strike against the anti-working class policies of the government! The government asked the trade unions to cancel their mobilization: the trade-union leadership refused, under the pressure of the anger in the streets. At the same time, it decided not to hold the demonstration that had been planned, from the headquarters of the GSEE confederation to Parliament, but to call directly for a rally in Syntagma Square, in front of the Parliament. The trade-union current of Syriza disagreed, and initially called for the demonstration to take place. Then it abandoned this idea and replaced it with a call for a pre-rally, a short distance from the official rally. In substance, Syriza conformed to the line of the trade-union leadership. The KKE, as it traditionally does (in reality, it operates a split in the trade union movement) called for a rally in Omonoia Square, from there organising a demonstration far from the centre of Athens. It thus conformed to the injunctions of Karamanlis not to demonstrate in the centre of the city. The far left decided to hold the demonstration on the day of the general strike, together with the teachers' unions. [6]

In spite of the campaign of intimidation by the government, a large number of workers took part in the GSEE rally. Because of its successive changes of position, the presence of Syriza was less strong. The demonstration of the far left and of the teachers' unions was made even more massive by the participation of the university and high school student unions which had come into the centre of the city. Following the demonstration general assemblies were held in the Polytechnic and the Faculty of Law, with a very high level of participation. However, trade unions did not move towards organising strike movements; they closed the door to any prolongation of the strike which would have brought the working class into the streets!

First elements for an appreciation of the movement

In this mid-December, the movement is still in a phase of extension, and so the first evaluation that can be made of its nature, its dynamics and its limits remains to be confirmed.

1- Although it is certainly a youth explosion which has the character of an uprising, it is not a generalized social uprising. Nowhere do we see signs of a similar movement in the working class, among rank-and-file trade-unionists, and of course even less so in their leaderships. The perspective of a general strike of a political character is not realistic. After the one-day strike on December 10, the possibility of linking up in the streets with the workers' movement is receding, and in a general fashion the conditions are not ripe for the rapid development of large-scale workers' struggles, in spite of growing discontent and the present readiness of the workers to fight.

2- The youth (student) revolt is firstly and especially turned against the police and against repression. There exists a hatred of the police which is quasi natural, profound and without any prospect of conciliation. That has been verified in the "war of the stones" and in "inflammatory" slogans. For a large section of the youth who took to the streets, this uprising tended to be spontaneously "anti-power". Consequently it adopts the violent methods of the anarchist groups and is turned against the symbols of the state, the banks and the multinationals. What unites youth with the forces of the left is obviously the anti-government character of the movement. Elements of violence which are due to the specificity of Athens as a showpiece capital are present, but they are not at all sufficient to describe the foundations of the revolt of young people. If we want to make a comparison with the French example, this revolt resembles to a small extent the movement against the CPE and corresponds more to the uprising of the youth of the suburbs. The starting point is the same: the death of a young person because of the police. At the same time, the social composition and the echo of the two uprisings is radically different: in Greece, what is involved is not minority violence, a revolt of those who are excluded, a voice of despair coming from suburbs that are neglected and left to

their own devices. It is the student youth, coming from all layers of society and from the immigrant communities, which is participating, in a united way, and that also goes for the violent episodes. Moreover, we do not see any massive rejection of the movement on the part of the rest of society: even though there is not always support, there is at least a benevolent neutrality. In any case one thing is sure: a whole generation is being abruptly politicized in the circumstances of a revolt and in total rupture with the Right.

3- In spite of the extent of the damage and the violence, up until the fifth day of the mobilizations, the balance of "public opinion" leaned towards condemnation of the police and the government. The fact that the victim was a 15 year old child favoured the expression of sympathy in Greek society. Undoubtedly, we can distinguish various positions towards the movement, which go from open support to a kind of fatalistic resignation in the face of this "social catastrophe" that "we, Greek society" have well deserved! In previous situations, the reaction of the middle classes and the conservative sectors of the working class would have been to react, with the encouragement of the media, by condemning the "troublemakers". This time, whereas the damage to property is much more serious, the reactions are very different: the declaration of the Athens Shopkeepers' Association pointing out that "the damage cannot be compared to the loss of a human life" is characteristic! As for the older generations of workers, they reject liberal government policies, worry about the consequences of the economic crisis and are indignant at the police immunity which has led to the murder of a 15-year old youth, but at the same time, they are not ready to mobilise now, particularly after the discouraging outcome of the mobilizations in defence of social security. For the moment, they have "entrusted" this revolt to their children. In spite of this climate, on the fifth day of the mobilizations, we saw the appearance in two provincial towns of groups of "indignant citizens", at the instigation of the far right, with the aim of "taking the law into their own hands". Considering the strength of the movement, such phenomena have been up to now very limited, but as long as the crisis lasts, there is a danger of them re-appearing.

4- Up to now, there is an absence of real forms of self-organization of all those who are engaged in the struggle. It should be said that the high degree of violence and the scattering of forces which it causes have not allowed the movement to "breathe" and to establish basic structures for itself. The decrease in the number of confrontations, during the day as well as at night, can be combined in the coming days with the establishment of processes which will make possible the organization of the struggle on the level of the schools and universities and of solidarity with the struggle in the workplaces and the neighbourhoods. And in this beginning of the second week, that is under way: according to the secondary teachers' union, 600 high schools are occupied! In the universities, 150 departments are occupied, following decisions taken in general assemblies. And administrative and municipal buildings are also starting to be occupied, even though the number is still very limited.

5- There is an absence of concrete procedures and concrete demands which would express the voice of all or of the majority of those taking part in the struggle.

The Left faced with the movement

â€¢ Syriza has neither the will nor the social forces to exert real pressure on the social democracy of PASOK, with the objective of mobilizing the parties and the trade unions in order to bring down the government. Inside the movement, it hesitates: as has traditionally been the case, its most radical tendencies (mainly the youth of Synaspismos), have been under the political hegemony of the far left. At the same time, as also happens traditionally, the leadership of Syriza enters the movement with hesitation and leaves as quickly as possible. On Thursday December 11 there took place the first demonstration in which Syriza did not take part, in spite of the fact that it had been decided on by the coordination committee of the Faculty of Law in which the youth of Synaspismos participate! Syriza is placed under a double pressure: that of the movement and that of the political system. In the first days it declared its official support and offered its "parliamentary cover" for the mobilizations, but in the following days, it condemned "violence" and showed itself to be clearly in favour of a rapid de-escalation of the mobilizations.

One day it formulated the demand of dissolution of the special bodies of police, but the following day withdrew it and replaced it by “democratic control of the police by Parliament”. [7] Under such conditions, Syriza is ceaselessly pulled in different directions, at the height of the mobilizations, by a tendency towards the dispersion of its components, something which particularly affects its smaller radical components. Let us underline on this point that the leadership of Synaspismos has found itself forced, under the pressure of the media, not to cover politically the youth of the party. Moreover, the smallest forces of Syriza, which come from the far left, are unable to exert the slightest influence on its political line, just as they do not succeed in developing autonomous political action in the course of events. And concerning the demonstration planned for the day of the general strike, they also let themselves be led by Synaspismos behind the decision of the trade-union bureaucracy and thus did not take part in the demonstration that was maintained by the teachers’ unions and the far left! [8]

â€¢ The KKE takes a contemptible position of de facto identification with the government when it speaks about groups of agitators, of “hooded ones” and of people being manipulated, in the name a supposed organized class struggle line... represented by itself! [9] In fact, it exceeds in petty-bourgeois conservatism the actual representatives of these layers (shopkeepers, bosses of small companies) who are affected by the damage due to the confrontations. The declarations of the party secretary, Aleka Papatou, are welcomed on the front pages of right-wing newspapers! In its declarations, it attacks Syriza, not from a left point of view, but in the same way as the Right, accusing Syriza of “caressing the ears of the hooded ones”. Instead of demanding the resignation of the government that assassinates young people, it succeeds with such declarations in receiving the congratulations of the government and of the far-right party Laos. At the same time, the youth of the KKE in the universities act - where the relationship of forces is favourable to them - to keep the university departments closed, so that general assemblies which can decide on occupation cannot be held! The KKE has not understood anything about this youth explosion, or does not want to understand anything that happens that occurs outside the suffocating framework of what it controls. It claims to want the politicization of youth but at the same time it sabotages, as soon as they appear, mass mobilizations – the best means of politicizing! - in the universities. Nevertheless, all that is not without cost for the leadership of the KKE: the pressure exerted by the developments of the movement on the militants of its youth wing is considerable, and in spite of the absence of any public expression of criticism (something that the Stalinist character of the party imposes), it is already known that more and more voices of protest are making themselves heard within the party. [10]

â€¢ The far left showed right from the beginning a remarkable level of preparation to intervene, and it was united on the barricades, in the street and in the occupation of the Faculty of Law in Athens. It did not “cave in” under the blows of repression at the time of the first great demonstration on Sunday 7 December. Since then it has been at the heart of most of the demonstrations. Faced with the climate of intimidation, it took the risk of holding a demonstration on the day of the strike called by the trade unions. It exerted a left pressure on Syriza to stop it pulling out of the mechanisms of building the movement, and it did not let the anarchist groups have the monopoly of the confrontations. It has launched initiatives to hold general assemblies in the universities and is trying to set up a coordination of sectors of the trade unions. It has also initiated the first attempts to organize the movement in the neighbourhoods. However it remains handicapped by the various tactical considerations of its components and rivalries between leaders, but also by an incapacity to turn out from the occupied university departments. But what characterizes it especially are insufficiencies on the level of political reflection and differences of appreciation within it, which prevent it from being able to propose clear objectives for the continuation of the mobilization. To bring down the government? Yes, but to put what in its place? It does not succeed in functioning as a really visible national political force, nor in exploiting the hesitations of Syriza or the abandoning of the movement by the KKE. Worse still: it does not manage to have a political project to exploit the political weakness of the government. The absence of a broad political regroupment and of the need to “be responsible” to a broad social public is thus not without consequences... And even faced with the erroneous practices of spontaneous anarchism of an important part of the student movement, whereas it is not in the position of being an enemy like the KKE or of taking its distance like Syriza, the far left has not, in the majority of cases, engaged forces proportional to what it could do to make the radical dispositions of youth evolve in its favour. And that is despite the fact that it has the advantage of having been from the beginning at the sides of the young people and not opposite them!

Perspectives

The first phase of the movement - spontaneous, particularly violent and made up of confrontations, is pretty much coming to an end. In this second week, which is getting under way, what is dominant are the mass processes in the schools and universities, whose goal is to occupy, and also the organization of the movement in the neighbourhoods. However, the break of the Christmas holidays is too close for us to be able to make forecasts about the future of the movement.

1. The political crisis resulting from these events has been a gravestone for the right-wing government, coming after the confrontation over social security and the irruption of various scandals. It is particularly difficult, even impossible for it to succeed in pulling itself together and continue in office for long, and to finish its term of office. The slogan "Down with the government!" will continue to be on the agenda. To tell the truth, this government should already have fallen, on the evening of Monday 8 December, but the lack of political of both PASOK and the parliamentary Left has allowed it to remain in power. For this reason, it will be thanks to the struggles of the oppressed that it will have to go, and any subsequent government can be sure that "things will be even worse for it".

2. We must insist on the anti-repression character of the movement, putting forward with a transitional logic propaganda for demands like the disarmament of the police, the dissolution of the special bodies of repression, the suppression of the anti-terrorist legislation, and by stressing the importance of the small victories that have been obtained by the movement, such as the reduction in police patrols and the withdrawal of the special forces from the district d' Exarcheia, from the centre d' Athens and from the area around the big university faculties. The release of all the demonstrators who have been arrested must be a central demand.

3- We have to link the youth upsurge demanding the punishment of those responsible for police brutality with the lasting objectives of the radicalized student movement to defeat the recent and future educational counter-reforms, and with frontal opposition to the liberal and anti-working class policies of the government (social security, privatizations, etc...). The launching of occupations in the university departments and the schools constitutes an immediate and decisive issue for the continuation of the movement. It is also essential to try systematically to set up a permanent trade-union coordination at branch level, which can encourage the organized participation of the workers in the unfolding movement and which can exert pressure on the leaderships of GSEE and of ADEDY [\[11\]](#), to push them to call a new general strike.

4- A key element for the relationship of forces between classes and for channelling the accumulated violence and discontent against the ruling class and its government is to overcome the division between Greek and foreign workers, to fight against racism, against the inhuman exploitation and the miserable living conditions that immigrants and refugees have to suffer. The murder by the police of a Pakistani worker a few weeks before that of the young teenager in Exarchia is far from having caused the same reactions. At the same time, the mobilization of the inhabitants of popular quarters, led by the far right, against immigrants, shows that exacerbated social contradictions can in present conditions take reactionary forms. [\[12\]](#)

5- We have to systematically repeat our appeal in favour of the political unity of the radical left, on the basis of our common experience in the movement of struggles, of yesterday and today, with the perspective of building a strong anti-capitalist left and with the political objective of intervening in favour of the principle of a joint candidature of the Greek anti-capitalist left in the European elections, in co-operation with the anti-capitalist left in Europe.

6- Let us act in interaction with the youth radicalisation, so that it will organise itself in a lasting way and work for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system and the capitalist state. Let us give to the ongoing youth revolt a perspective that neither anarchism nor reformism can give it!

Central Committee, OKDE-Spartakos (Greek section of the Fourth International) mid-December 2008.

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[1] PASOK: Greek socialist party, founded by Andreas Papandreou and led today by his son Giorgos. After almost twenty years in government (except for one short period at the beginning of the 1990s when there was a government of the Right with Synaspismos, which then included both the present Synaspismos and the KKE), it lost power in 2004. Since then, in spite of various crises, it remains an example of the capacities of resistance of social democracy, even when it has become social-liberalism: whereas some people said it was finished, beset by splits, it still has the leadership of the trade union movement and is today ahead in the opinion polls, with more than 30 per cent of voting intentions. The KKE is the old Greek Communist Party, hyper-Stalinist and incredibly sectarian, especially in the trade union movement. After its crisis in the 1990s, when its youth organization split from it, it succeeded in reconstituting a youth organization, and it is the only party seriously rooted in the high schools. Syriza is a coalition with a radical label, made up of the reformist Synaspismos, a party coming from the Eurocommunist left, and various small groups of the radical and revolutionary left. Since many untrue things have been said (and believed) about this regroupment, it is necessary to make the following points: Firstly, for Greek public opinion, Syriza is the same thing as Synaspismos, and the far left has almost no influence, given the internal relationships of forces. Secondly: last spring some people were talking about a new phenomenon in Europe, with a coalition which in an impetuous movement was going to compete with PASOK electorally, quoting opinion polls which credited it with up to 18 per cent of voting intentions. We have said the same thing since the beginning: even though Syriza has been able to attract a new audience, thanks to the image of the young president of Synaspismos, the sympathetic Alexis Tsipras, nothing fundamental has changed, and the opinion poll results for Syriza were used above all by PASOK voters to exert pressure on their party. This analysis has been proved correct: even before the revolt of December, the opinion polls showed Syriza below 10 per cent (7.5 per cent in one poll). In this beginning of the month of January, it is credited with between 8.6 and 7.1 per cent (in the 2007 legislative elections it got 5.04 per cent). That does not mean that it cannot rebound in the opinion polls. As for its policies, this document of the Greek section of the Fourth International shows what is crucial at this juncture. Nothing has changed under the Mediterranean sun: revolutionaries, as the OKDE-Spartakos has always done, will continue to discuss with and to work with Synaspismos, a party which is open to radical ideas, but the priority is more than ever to build, in complete independence, an anti-capitalist left, something which is possible in this country where the far left numbers several thousand militants. And, in this month of January 2009, things are progressing concretely on this question!

[2] In the same way as in France in 2003, the betrayal of the trade unions during the struggle in defence of pensions was very traumatic for the re-launching of big working-class mobilizations, the betrayal last spring treason in spring by the Greek trade-union bureaucracy of working-class combativeness on this question weighed heavily on subsequent mobilizations. Whereas important sectors (the electricity industry, road maintenance workers) engaged in sustained strikes, the bureaucracy did everything it could so that the general strike of March 19 did not lead to the only possible response in the face of the plans of the Right: an ongoing general strike. Instead of exerting its influence in this direction, Syriza chose to launch a campaign of petitions – taken up by PASOK and by the trade-union bureaucrats - to demand a referendum on the law that had been adopted, declaring that we would see what we would see... We saw everything: the law was applied, and immediately afterwards the Right began the reform of contracts for young workers, in order to inflict more flexibility on them.

[3] In fact, it is difficult to translate the Greek term “antiexousiasts”: literally, the “anti-power”. We can speak about a milieu in the sense that this current is very broad, going from organised libertarians to groups or individuals for whom the only political answer to the violence of the bourgeois state seems to be violence against everything that is symbolised by the state and its institutions, by banks and big business. We can translate it by “anarchist milieu” in the absence of a satisfactory term.

[4] The Polytechnic School is in fact the Athenian university of polytechnic sciences, it has of course no military status, unlike in France, and it was the scene of one of the great acts of resistance to the dictatorship of the colonels (1967-74): its occupation by the students, repressed in a blood bath, on November 17, 1973.

[5] The “hooded ones” is in fact the term that has been used for years, in particular in the press, to designate activists who engage in urban violence. In December, “hooding” was adopted by thousands of young people giving expression to their revolt.

[6] Like March 19, 2008 with the question of continuing the general strike, December 10 is a key date of the movement, moreover a date when it would have been possible to move towards a movement like that of May 1968 in France, with the possibility of workers entering into a prolonged struggle. To hold the demonstration was to remind the government that the street belonged to us, by getting the workers and the youth of all the left currents to march together on a route of 2 or 3 kilometres (could the KKE have justified a separate demonstration? Perhaps, but at the price of internal conflict!). In this context, such a dynamic would inevitably and immediately have become political! This is of course what the Right feared and what the various left bureaucracies did not want, instead falling back on a rally with a few speeches concluded as quickly as possible! Overall, several tens of thousands of workers and young people took part either in the demonstration or in the rally...

[7] We should point out that on December 12, right in the middle of mobilizations that involved confrontations and repression, Alekos Alavanos, one of the leaders of Synaspismos and president of Syriza, met the leadership of the police trade union to point out that on the one hand it was necessary for the rights of young people to be respected, but that "the other side of the coin is the police officer as a citizen", specifying that "a respectable police officer is one who has received good training and who carries out his functions within society". Of course, this conception of the democratization of the police is thoroughly typical of reformists, and is exactly the position of, for example, the French Communist Party. On the other hand, we are far from criticizing the fact of meeting with police trade unionists: but the difficulty which arises is really that of the moment chosen, when police violence was being unleashed against the movement and a campaign of the Right was under way in defence of the poor police who were exposed to all sorts of violence and projectiles... Did Alavanos have a mandate from all the components of Syriza for this meeting? One thing is sure: he had no mandate from the movement!

[8] With the notable exception of KOE, the most important of the far-left groups in Syriza. Furthermore, this position illustrates the absence of any common project of the far-left groups in Syriza: what is there in common between KOE, which acts in an autonomist way (groups under its control impose freedom from payment, for example of motorway tolls) and intends to have its political weight recognized in Syriza; DEA, which denounced in its leaflets for the 2007 legislative elections... the reformism of Synaspismos and which sees Syriza as a means of strengthening itself; and Kokkino, which thinks it can make Synaspismos evolve to the left, forgetting that it has never been a problem for Synaspismos to sign very radical documents, their implementation on the ground being another question?!

[9] Without forgetting an obsession of the KKE: according to it foreign secret services are behind the events of December!

[10] This justifies the need to force the KKE to take part in united actions. It would be a mistake to let its Stalinist leadership deform at will combative young activists, whereas what is necessary is in fact to reinforce unity of action on the left. A united front policy must, of course, also address PASOK members.

[11] ADEDY is the Federation of Public Sector Workers.

[12] To turn the situation around by counting on reactionary reflexes is one of the objectives sought by the Right (with some differences: it seems that certain sectors wanted after Monday December 8 to simply call in the army). At the same time it is trying to create the idea of nice police officers being attacked by violent troublemakers, and calling "for a return to normal", an idea that is accepted by all the parliamentary groups. In any case, and in spite of the very strange shooting which seriously wounded a police officer in the night of January 5 and was followed by a gathering of several hundred police officers on the initiative of the far right, the demonstration in defence of education on January 9 mobilised around 10,000 demonstrators, led by the teachers' unions. It should also be noted that there is a growing campaign of active solidarity with Constantina Kouneva, an immigrant trade-union leader, who was seriously injured by vitriol in an attack on December 23, without any doubt because of her exemplary militant activity against the disastrous working conditions in cleaning companies.