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Obituary

The last escape - Theologos Psaradellis (1943-2021)

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Publication date: Thursday 22 April 2021

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Theo Psaradellis, our friend and comrade, is no more. Lithographer, trade unionist, a militant of the Greek section of the Fourth International as long as his health permitted, he was an endearing, generous and courageous character. A man of action rather than an ideologist, he was an exemplary fighter against the dictatorship of the colonels (1967-1974), which earned him a “diploma” displayed in his kitchen!

Following the 1967 coup, he unhesitatingly joined the resistance to the military junta. First arrested in 1969 - for stealing a batch of dynamite for future action - he was tortured by the atrocious “falanga” method and then placed in solitary confinement. With patience and stubbornness – reminiscent of the hero of the famous Bresson film, “Un condamné à mort s’est évadé” (“A man escaped”) - he succeeded in unpicking the lock with the help of a spoon and, taking advantage of a moment of inattention by the guards, escaped.

After an adventurous sea journey in a rowing boat, Theo arrived in Turkey, and, after a brief stay in this country, tried to take refuge in Bulgaria. However, he was imprisoned by the Bulgarian authorities - that is to say the Stalinist bureaucracy – who without qualms handed this dangerous Trotskyist over to the Greek police. During his trial in Greece, the military judge joked about the “Bulgarian Communist brothers” who betrayed him, attracting this scathing response from Psaradellis: “This affair does not concern you. One day the Bulgarian workers will settle their accounts with the Stalinists in their country”.

Sentenced by the courts of the junta and imprisoned, Theo escaped a second time! After having crossed through the Balkans (avoiding Bulgaria ...) and Italy – where he was supported by our comrade Livio Maitan - he went into exile in France in 1971. In Paris, he was active among the Greek exiles against the dictatorship and worked as a lithographer at the newspaper *Rouge*. He also participated in the activities of the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire, the French section of the Fourth International, where he met a Greek-speaking Yugoslav comrade Nadia - who became his wife and the mother of his two children.

Returning to Greece in 1974, after the fall of the colonels, Theo was again active in the OKDE (Internationalist Communist Organization of Greece, Fourth International) until the end of the 1990s, when, after a serious heart operation, he abandoned active militancy. However, on 18 July 2002, during the police campaign to hunt the “17 November Movement”, Theo was arrested and denounced as a member of this group by “repentants” - who later ended up publicly retracting. He was imprisoned until his new (last) trial began on 3 March 2003, which had considerable international repercussions.

In his testimony, Theo refuted the police accusations and denied any participation in a group whose nationalist orientation he did not share, let alone its methods - the execution of deputies, industrialists, right-wing journalists, Turkish diplomats and so on. On the other hand, he admitted having taken part in the attack on a bank in 1986 - an offence which was already prescribed - and which fortunately caused no injuries or deaths. But why embark on such an action, twelve years after the end of the colonels' regime? Psaradellis explained that his goal had been to collect money to finance the publication - which had been pending for years - of the works of Pandelis Pouliopolos, the founder of Greek Trotskyism ... without notifying the section. But he received no money and - realizing the role of 17 November in this operation - severed all ties with it.

Those who know Theo and campaigned alongside him will recognize in this mixture of credulity and political honesty this lithographer who, like other Greek workers of his generation and his political tradition, had a real veneration of culture in general, and the political legacy of revolutionary Marxism in particular. A veneration all the greater since he

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had to stop studying at primary school. Of course, we can consider that he showed imprudence, naivety, and an erroneous political judgment ... Let us recall, as an attenuating circumstance, the famous phrase of Brecht in *The Threepenny Opera*: “robbing a bank is nothing compared to... starting a bank”. “My ideology”, he declared, “does not forbid me expropriating banks, but it condemns, politically and morally, the assassination of political opponents”.

We were among the many defence witnesses, Greek and French, who came to his trial to explain Psaradellis’s actions, and to show the incompatibility between his political culture and murderous practices. Many political figures, in Greece and around the world, signed an appeal for his release. It was a great moment of human warmth. Finally, the court recognized his innocence, and he was released.

Dear Theo, dear friend and comrade, you have once again succeeded in your escape ... But this time we will no longer be able to welcome you and laugh with you and those close to you who have supported and loved you so much. But we will not forget you and we are wholeheartedly with Nadia, Marianna and Stratis.

Catherine (Samary), Eleni (Varikas), Hubert (Krivine) et Michael (Löwy)

PS:

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