

Communist Federation of Britain (ML)

Greece

Source: *Struggle*, Number 50 January 1974

Transcription, Editing and Markup: Paul Saba and Sam Richards

Copyright: This work is in the Public Domain under the Creative Commons Common Deed. You can freely copy, distribute and display this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works. Please credit the Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line as your source, include the url to this work, and note any of the transcribers, editors & proofreaders above.

GREECE

IN 1973 THE GREEK people found its voice after five years of silence. The mass struggles of the spring - which centred round student unrest - reached a new stage in November with the extension of the struggle to all sectors of society. For a few days the whole fabric of the Colonels' Greece was falling apart: tens of thousands of people were marching in the major cities, production was at a standstill. Only the ruthless intervention of the army brought temporary relief to the tottering ruling group, at the cost of 200 workers and students killed, many more wounded, arrested and tortured.



Only the ruthless intervention of the army brought temporary relief to the tottering ruling group, at the cost of 200 workers and students killed, many more wounded, arrested and tortured.

NEW JUNTA, SAME FACES

Faced with this situation of open confrontation and the exposure of its liberalisation charade, the Greek ruling class and its US backers reacted in time-honoured fashion - with another military coup. The new junta of General Gizikis has made some show of its honest and liberal intent. Press censorship, for instance has been lifted, with the proviso that papers which are openly hostile to the regime or the 'status quo' will be closed down. However, any illusions that the new clique was any different from the old one were quickly dispelled. The arrests and repression have continued. Even in terms of personnel there has been little change: two thirds of the new junta came to power with Papadopoulos, they all

have close connections with the C.I.A. General Ioannidis, generally reckoned as the strong man behind the coup, was head of the military police under Papadopoulos and as such was responsible for the wave of arrests in November.

'DEMOCRATISATION'

Why then the second coup? Why the pretence of liberalism? Quite simply because this is what the US Imperialists want, and this is what the Greek ruling class need. US involvement in Greek affairs has always been clear, and while they have continued to give full and open support to the reactionary leaders of Greece, they have increasingly brought pressure to bear for the restoration of some kind

of democracy. This is not primarily in response to public opinion, but because of the concern expressed by the US and her NATO allies at Greece's 'lack of stability' and the 'capability of the armed forces'.

This same concern is felt by the Greek ruling class. The Junta came to power in 1967 in order to stamp out a mass movement which threatened to revolutionise Greek society. Internally it maintained its position in two ways, by open repression - abolition of civil rights, mass arrests, torture; and by short-term economic growth. In the first years of the dictatorship there was a relative increase in prosperity, and opposition to the regime was confined to the acts of individuals.

Last year however, these two essential props collapsed. The student movement demonstrated that repression was ineffective against determined mass action, and the Greek 'economic miracle' ground to a halt. Prices escalated, and inflation which had been negligible in previous years, soared to 6% in October alone. The working class responded with militant action and there was an outburst of strikes and demonstrations in the summer. In order to contain this unrest, the Junta was forced

to make concessions - the amnesty for political prisoners, the ending of martial law. But these concessions in turn only served to increase the demands and the militancy of the masses. The Junta was faced with a contradiction of its own making. In order to maintain the 'status quo' it needed to suppress the mass movement, but in order to contain the mass movement it had to grant concessions which threatened the 'status quo'. It was this contradiction - in the words of Rigas Pheraios - the Communist students organisation "the contradiction between democratic statements and dictatorial practice" which led to the events of mid-November and the downfall of Papadopoulos.

The level of open repression employed by Papadopoulos was unacceptable to the Greek ruling class. Their need is for social stability and the maintenance of the 'status quo'. It is this which the new dictator will be expected to provide, and, we can be sure, with the same lack of success as his predecessor.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

For the Greek people there are no illusions. The struggle against the Greek ruling class and US imperialism is continuing. Learning from their recent experiences they have developed new forms of struggle. Workers have set up action committees at local level to carry on the continuing struggle. During the height of the confrontation a remarkable degree of co-ordination was established between workers, students and peasants: radio stations were set up, medical services were established. What had been a purely student organisation Rigas Pheraios - became an organisation of students and workers. These, and other

similar developments illustrate the advances made by the Greek people and the long term perspectives for success.

At the same time it must be said that the mass movement of November contained a number of weaknesses, from which we, as well as they, have much to learn. The role of the army in temporarily saving the situation was crucial: the blood of 200 dead testifies to the inability of heroic actions to destroy tanks. Some advances were made, in terms of exploiting contradictions in the armed forces, and a number of soldiers sided with the people. Twelve officers and men were shot for mutiny during the attack on the polytechnic. The question of military strength however must be a major concern of revolutionaries. Until the army can be at least neutralised, no mass movement can hope for any lasting success.

Closely connected to the question of the army, is the question of organisation. The movement was largely spontaneous in character and while this demonstrates a heightened level of confidence and militancy among the Greek people, as Communists we understand that heroism is not enough to change society.

question of organisation. The movement was largely spontaneous in character and while this demonstrates a heightened level of confidence and militancy among the Greek people, as Communists we understand that heroism is not enough to change society.

The heroism of the workers, peasants and students shows that there are great opportunities for the revolutionary movement in Greece. Never before have so many sectors of society been united in open opposition to the ruling group. Many advances have been made; the student movement has shown great skill in exploiting the contradictions among the ruling class, perhaps most of all the Greek people have learned that with mass action they can stand up to repression. The tyrant is dead, next time it will be the tyranny.

E.K. (London)

'The tyrant has fallen: Next the tyranny'