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**Greece:
The November Uprising**

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1973: Year of Europe

RICHARD DU BOFF

GREECE: THE MEANING OF THE NOVEMBER UPRISING

BY ANDREAS PAPANDREOU

A genuine popular uprising took place in Greece on the night of November 16, 1973. It has altered permanently the political trajectory of the country. Not only did it spell the end of the U.S.-sponsored experiment of Papadopoulos in "limited," "responsible," or "guided" democracy; it also laid the foundations for the development of a truly massive people's liberation movement.

With some notable exceptions, the world press played down the event. It was presented as a limited though intense university student rebellion. Actually, as will become clear further on, it amounted to a genuine, if short-lived, social and political revolution. Not much has been written, either, about the incredible brutality of the police, barely matched by similar acts of the Chilean army in Santiago last September.

One example suffices. As ambulances took away the wounded from the scene of battle, police would block their way, stop them, drag wounded and doctors alike onto the pavement, and then proceed to beat them mercilessly. Then they would climb into the ambulances and drive on through the crowds—and as unsuspecting citizens applauded and cheered the victims, the police would emerge and fire their automatics.

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GREECE

An orchestrated report, time and again, gave as "thirteen" the number of dead. While we may never know the exact number of the dead and wounded, it is certain that at least 400 people lost their lives and that at least 1,000 were wounded. Reliable reports reaching us now indicate the existence of mass graves in two army camp locations in the environs of Athens.

The first signs of the brewing storm came on November 4, during memorial services for George Papandreu, the last elected premier. Approximately 10,000 citizens gathered at the cemetery. As the services ended, the crowd, chanting revolutionary songs, moved forcefully toward Constitution Square. The slogans included "democracy," "death to Papadopoulos," "out with the Americans," and "Thailand, Thailand." The police tried to block the militant crowd, but failed. In the skirmishes that ensued, many police were wounded. It was only after several university students had managed to raise the Greek flag in Constitution Square that the police finally succeeded in breaking up the demonstration. There were demonstrations again a week later outside the courthouse where suspected leaders of the November 4 clashes were on trial. But no one could suspect the massive character and the violence of the events that were to follow, as the students of the Polytechnic Institute decided on November 14 to occupy it. The occupation of the Polytechnic was a carefully designed political act. A press release, given out on November 16 by the Student Coordination Committee, clearly shows that:

The students . . . have become conscious that our problem in relation to the democratization of education and the operation of the educational system could not be solved without change in the political situation. Thus the students and the working people have taken over the Polytechnic Institute to make our positions clear and to call upon the Greek people to join us and fight with us until final victory.

The main prerequisite for the solution of the problems of the people is the immediate overthrow of the tyrannical regime of the junta and the simultaneous establishment of popular sovereignty.

The establishment of popular sovereignty is intertwined with national independence from foreign interests which for years have been supporting tyranny in our country. The vast mobilization of the Greek people and the demonstrations of solidarity from all

corners of Greece is the best answer to all those who tried to defame us.

Greek people, the struggle for popular sovereignty and national independence today means the immediate mass trade-union fight . . . strikes, mass mobilizations, mass demonstrations, with target: the general strike for the overthrow of the junta.

Here at the Polytechnic is the center for the mobilization, *en masse*, of the popular struggle. All united in the struggle for democracy and national independence!

The Polytechnic then became the headquarters for the revolution. Workers, professionals, and peasants had joined the students. They elected task-oriented standing committees, which in turn elected a secret coordinating committee. The coordinating committee had a powerful weapon—a radio transmitter that kept calling upon the people of Greece to join the struggle. "This is the radio station of the free fighting students, of the free fighting Greeks. . . . Greek people, today you are engaged in your greatest battle, in your strongest and most noble struggle for the overthrow of the dictatorship, for freedom, for democracy, for national independence, for social change. Today you must stand up and be counted. Today you must struggle with us. Today you must act in solidarity with the youth of the country. . . ."

The people responded *en masse*, streaming toward the Polytechnic to form a protective ring around it, and to offer food, drugs, and money. They then spread rapidly throughout the city to liberate almost three fourths of it. Fires were started in many parts of the city as the night wore on, to neutralize the effect of tear-gas bombs which were the first offensive weapon used by the police.

The radio of the Polytechnic continued with appeals for medicine, for ambulances, for doctors. The confrontation was on. The coordinating committee's slogans resounded throughout the city through the transistor radios being carried by the populace, and through the mouths of the demonstrators: "fascism will not pass," "power to the workers," "the Americans out of Greece," "Greece out of NATO," "sovereignty to the people," "down with the junta." In every part of Athens there was a sense that the critical moment was approaching. Some public buildings were occupied by the people. An attempt was made

to occupy the Ministry of Public Order and the telecommunications building.

The radio went on: "People of Athens, don't go away! Don't be afraid! Tonight fascism will die!" As midnight approached, barricades were thrown together by groups of citizens who spontaneously formed action committees. Soon after midnight the sporadic gunfire of the day turned into repeated, frequent bursts of shooting, and the tanks began moving across the city toward the Polytechnic. Tear gas, the sirens of ambulances, the fire of automatics, spread confusion and anger but not fear. The radio continued: "United the people are fighting against the junta, the agents of foreign interests. We are unarmed! We are unarmed! We will repel the attack of the occupation forces with our naked breasts. The tanks are moving against us. The tanks of America's agents. . . . We believe that no soldier, no officer who loves his country will dare to kill his brothers, to spill Greek blood. Two tanks are reaching the gates of the Polytechnic. The guns are trained on us. They will not attack. They will not kill the youth of Greece!"

The tanks moved on, and opened the way for the police. It is a fact, however, that the soldiers were reluctant to shoot. No less than ten were executed on the spot for disobedience. But the police more than made up for this. Trained over the years by U.S. specialists, they attacked with speed and ferocity. During this night, martial law was declared.

The decision to reimpose martial law to quell the revolution could not have been an easy one for Papadopoulos and his U.S. sponsors. For it meant the end of his "republic," the democratic façade that had been intended to offer the military regime the respectability requisite for participation in European councils.

While the republic is now dead, a brief review of its main characteristics is essential, for it discloses the Pentagon's and the CIA's concept of what an army-ruled client state ought to be like. Furthermore, it provides the necessary background for understanding the reluctance of the bourgeois political parties in Greece to accept the rules of the game incorporated in Papadopoulos's constitution. This reluctance, to a large extent the reflection of the militant resistance of the people to military

rule, did contribute to the climate surrounding the mid-November confrontation. The republic which emerged from the Thieu-like referendum of July 29, 1973 (Papadopoulos ran for the office of president unopposed), was not meant to be a variant of bourgeois democracy, for it vested directly all the substantive powers of the state in the president. According to the constitution, the armed forces are recognized as a fourth branch of government, side by side with the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature. In particular, the president, who holds office for seven years, is the active head of the armed forces, and is vested with both executive and legislative powers in all matters relating to national defense (the military and para-military), public order (police, gendarmerie, national security), intelligence, and foreign policy. Thus the *management of violence* and *foreign policy* are the exclusive prerogative of the president, who therefore could not possibly hold the office without the confidence and the support of the armed forces. The central mechanisms of the state are *formally* insulated from the parliamentary process, which is restricted to secondary issues. In bourgeois democracy these mechanisms are protected from the sway of the parliamentary process in informal, though not always subtle, ways. And the mechanisms of oppression are available to be used, as was so dramatically displayed in Chile, to set aside both parliament and constitution when there is a threat to the interests of the ruling class.

Furthermore, in bourgeois democracy restrictions on the participation of political parties and individual candidates in the parliamentary process take the form of "loading the dice," whether this relates to access to funds, or to access to the mass news media—not taking into account, of course, the more subtle impact of indoctrination of the populace with the value system of the dominant class. Naturally, there are exceptions to this schema in many bourgeois democracies. In many countries, e.g., the participation of the communist parties is forbidden by constitutional provisions. But under Papadopoulos's republic a permanent instrument for *policing* political life is provided by the constitution itself. The president appoints for life a constitutional court which must approve party constitutions, party platforms and individual candidacies. Its judgment is based on the

"national interest." This court has sweeping powers. For not only can it deny irrevocably the participation of a party or a candidate in elections, but it may—any time it so decides—remove from office a member of parliament or of the cabinet, or indeed all the members of a party, if it determines that this serves the national interest. Thus the armed forces, through the president, retain effective control over the political life of the country.

Actually, Papadopoulos's republic guaranteed only that the armed forces of Greece would dominate the political life of the country. What it could not guarantee *formally* was that these armed forces would act in the interests of a metropolitan center, in the interests of the United States. For in that case Greece would have become, in name as well as in fact, a colony of the United States, something that would contradict the new style of colonialism propagated in the context of contemporary imperialism. This function of the Greek armed forces is guaranteed, however, through substantive processes—such as the training of Greek officers in the United States and other NATO countries, control over appointments to key positions in the military forces, infiltration of CIA agents throughout the Greek intelligence apparatus, the dependence of the Greek armed forces on U.S. matériel, the organic integration of the Greek armed forces into broader defense plans for the Mediterranean, American control of the army's information system, etc.

This constitution, whose intellectual father is Professor Dimitrios Koussoulas of Howard University, was an attempt to formalize, to write into law, certain aspects of the power structure which have been characteristic of Greece ever since the Civil War of the 1940s. It is a fact that while the Center Union party, a broad coalition of populist political forces, took government office by defeating rightist strong-man Karamanlis in the elections of February 1964 (receiving 53 percent of the popular vote), *it could not penetrate the machinery of the state*. To all intents and purposes, the armed forces, the intelligence services, and the security forces were entirely beyond the reach of cabinet ministers. The Center Union's attempt to challenge this reality led to a confrontation with the King—then the spokesman for the Greek establishment—the dismissal of the

Center Union government, the "unyielding campaign" for new elections, and a deep political crisis that was resolved only with the colonels' coup of April 21, 1967.

To understand the post-Civil War history of Greece, one must bear in mind that the political life of the country was closely supervised, when not directed, by the United States. The Washington formula for Greece was simple. It included the direct penetration of the Greek state machinery, all the way through to the Palace; unconditional support for an affiliated, dependent political party, the party of the Right, which was supposed to win all elections—no matter through what means; the development of a bourgeois opposition party whose task was to engage in creative criticism of the policies of the rightist government, a role that had been reserved for the party of the Center Union; finally, the obliteration of any party of the Left. But things went wrong for the Americans in the 1960s. The Center Union party won a spectacular majority and formed a government. What was worse for the United States, this victory was based on a program that stressed national independence and substantial social reforms—providing a bridge to power for the Greek Left.

From information that is now available, it is clear that the decision for a military coup in Greece was taken in Washington in mid-1965. But the actual execution was delayed until 1967 to forestall the kind of bloodshed that recently occurred in Santiago. In Greece this delay was possible because the machinery of violence, indeed the whole of the Greek state, was under pervasive American control. Time was needed, however, in order to install a succession of puppet governments that would clean up the trade unions, eliminate all possible opponents in the armed services and the security forces, and create the proper climate. The monarchy's prestige was unavoidably used up during the two-year confrontation between the establishment and the popular forces. In any case, since a decision had been made to rely thenceforth on the armed forces, on the state machinery itself for the effective control and government of Greece, the monarchy's role no longer seemed important. This explains the selection of Papadopoulos and his CIA-trained and controlled colleagues for carrying out the coup rather than have the King assume direct power.

It was expected that after six years of harsh military rule, the Greeks would be ready to accept a constitution that would guarantee parliamentary processes—but no access to power. This was the meaning of Papadopoulos's "republic." To get the political world of Greece to accept this façade, thus giving sanction to the structure of power, Papadopoulos declared an amnesty for political prisoners and initiated other liberalization measures. But the political world of Greece did not take the bait. By the end of September, Papadopoulos and the Americans knew that they were in trouble. There were two immediate reasons for this. First, the clear-cut, black-and-white secondary role reserved by the constitution to parliament and to political parties; second, the immediate and intense use of all the freedoms that were extended by the regime to the press. The press, after long years of being gagged, and in the context of a highly competitive market, served the people what they had been yearning for: an open critique of the regime and a thorough disclosure of the authoritarian character of the "republic." Students, workers, peasants, and professionals started mobilizing in organized confrontations across the land. The regime, concerned that tightening the vise would mar the image of the new republic and condemn the experiment to failure, allowed the situation to accelerate. The final blow came with the popular uprising of mid-November. The regime overreacted, conducted a massacre, and became thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the armed forces and the United States. Papadopoulos had to go. A new guard had to be called in. Throwing Papadopoulos to the wolves—in this case allowing him his freedom at his Onassis villa on the Attica sea coast—would also momentarily placate the anger of the people and hopefully persuade them that something new had happened, that a change had occurred.

The "coup d'état" of November 25th constitutes simply a change of guard. The new junta is merely a portion of the old one, and it took power peacefully under the supervision of the CIA—to demonstrate, as the Greeks put it, that "the Greek army is the most disciplined component of the American military forces." In accordance with the wishes of the CIA, the post of prime minister was given to its trusted instrument, Chicago lawyer Androutsopoulos. (One of Androutsopoulos's main prob-

lems is that he does not speak the Greek language well.) Brigadier Dimitrios Ioannides is the strong man of the new six-man junta. The head of the feared military police (ESA) and a well-known torturer, he is dedicated to serving American policies blindly and is deeply anti-communist. Equally committed to U.S. control of Greece and to direct military rule is general Bonanos, chief of the Greek Armed Forces. General Ghizikis, the new president of the republic, is another of the six. He is relatively unimportant, but represents those senior officers who favor a more indirect presence of the armed forces in the political life of Greece. A somewhat larger, overlapping group or "committee," consisting of twelve officers, designs the grand strategy of the regime—and is, in a sense, the brain-trust of the six-man junta. It includes Colonel Steakakis who is the only junta member committed to a Qaddafi-style national independence and state capitalism.

Actually, two tendencies predominate within the ranks of the new junta. The first is for indefinite, direct, military rule, with the cabinet being relegated to the status of a necessary ornament. The second is for a deal with the politicians of the Right and Center-Right, which would permit the armed forces to play a less visible role in the public life of the country. The politician that seems best suited to this role is Karamanlis. But this does not mean that there exist no alternative choices. Indeed there seem to be quite a few candidates on hand.

One should not exaggerate the importance of these currents or tendencies within the ranks of the new junta, for the United States plays the decisive, determining role. Under this junta, more than ever before, Washington openly controls the public life of Greece. And the present regime represents to the Americans no more than a holding operation. But there seems to be some uncertainty on the part of the policy-makers as to where to go from here. They are no longer in possession of a grand design for Greece—and this in the face of a deepening and irresolvable economic crisis and a citizenry that, following the bloody events of November, has found renewed strength and determination to confront the regime.

This explains the peculiar combination of continuing and expanding repression—arrests, torture, the closing down of news-

papers—and a complete absence of any visible policy in connection either with the economy or the political evolution of the country.

The political problems confronting the regime are no less severe than the economic. It is clear to the military, as it is clear to the Americans, that naked force will not work in the long run. The eruption of new bloody confrontations will corrode the morale of the armed forces, no matter how tightly the Americans control the Greek military. Thus it would seem highly desirable to those in control to proceed once again toward some sort of democratic façade. Can they succeed where Papadopoulos failed? November's events have conclusively disclosed how explosive Papadopoulos's scheme was—the formal partition of the political process into a component monopolized by the armed forces and a component open to parliamentary competition. The emerging concept is that of a strong police state, backed by the armed forces, and ornamented by a civilian government recruited from among the rightist political world. For the success of this scheme it is not enough to woo a portion of the political world—a process, by the way, already initiated through the announcement of a reduction in the powers of the president over national defense, public order, and foreign policy, and through a promise of further reforms along these lines. It is essential, indeed critical to the success of the scheme, that those in charge gain for it a minimal popular support. Such support, to be meaningful, to make a difference, would have to come from the Greek middle class. This would then permit the regime to introduce the paraphernalia, the external characteristics, of bourgeois parliamentary processes.

The new junta and its American sponsors are forced by the press of circumstances to attempt now what Papadopoulos failed to achieve—to transform the covert foreign occupation of Greece into a genuinely fascist regime. Clearly such fascism cannot be of the metropolitan variety. For this would presuppose a more or less robust Greek bourgeoisie. The Greek bourgeoisie, however, is Greek in name only. Foreign capital is predominant. This is as true for the merchant marine as it is true in finance and in big industry—big, that is, by Greek standards. It is equally true in tourism—recently the leading sector of the Greek econ-

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omy. Even the big import-export merchants, who are a significant and vocal component of the Greek ruling class, are dependent on foreign finance or on Greek financial institutions whose policies, however, are dictated by the Greek state—a satellite client state of the United States that reflects the dominant position of U.S. capital in Greece.

But what are the chances of an evolution to what might be called *peripheral fascism*? The key here lies with the middle class. The economic development of Greece during the last seven years—basically a continuation of Karamanlis's period, has undermined the economic base of the middle class. The Greek economic "miracle" had to be short-lived. It was a reflection of the early phase of the takeover by foreign capital after the country was made "safe and stable" for investment. Economic growth was built on a pattern of disarticulation of the Greek economy, on a pattern of dependent, peripheral capitalist development. Greek agriculture, the technological potential of which is quite substantial, and which provides the means of livelihood for almost one half of the Greek population, was allowed to slow down to an almost zero rate of growth during the era of the colonels. Emigration from the countryside to Athens, to Germany, to Belgium, to Australia, to Canada—which began in the post-Civil War years—continued unabated under Papadopoulos's rule. Tourism and luxury apartment construction took the lead. Export-oriented industrial development of the country centered on superficial, finishing-touch activities. Increasingly the Greek economy's changing structure reflected the growth targets of the large and dominant foreign corporate investors. Suddenly the mirage vanished, for that was what it was, a mirage of economic development, when actually what was being fostered was economic underdevelopment—the fate of all satellites swimming in the orbit of capitalist metropolises. Inflation, in 1973, soared to a rate of 40 percent per annum, while the trade deficit passed the \$2 billion mark. And what is more, starting with 1974, Greece must transfer abroad \$300 million annually in interest and amortization on external debt contracted during the colonels' era.

The middle class, the Greek petty bourgeoisie, under these circumstances finds itself increasingly sharing the fate of the

worker and the peasant. It follows that this is hardly the time for the Americans to try a fascist solution in Greece. They are bound to fail in this for reasons well beyond their control.

In a very real sense the United States faces an impasse in Greece. The anti-American feeling runs so high that bourgeois democracy is not an eligible option for them. The Greeks have come to identify their bondage, their economic exploitation, with U.S. policy, and, of course, with NATO. No political party could survive in free elections that did not commit itself to national independence, to a complete rupture with NATO, to ousting the American military from the shores of Greece. Limited democracy, Papadopoulos style, represents an unstable equilibrium solution. Popular action would soon force the hand of the military, and a reversion to naked military rule would be inevitable. But naked military rule, the present state of affairs, is increasingly difficult as a long-run solution. The blood of November has united the Greek masses in a common determination to struggle on with all the means at their disposal. Beyond that, the NATO allies of the United States are quite upset by the recent developments. They face internal political problems over their policies vis-à-vis Greece—especially from the Left, from the trade unions, and of course from the politicized youth. Under U.S. pressure they had decided to rid themselves of this conscience-irritant by acquiescing in the solution provided by the Papadopoulos republic. Indeed, European social democracy had urged the bourgeois political world of Greece to accept the package. But this deal is dead now. Once again Greece is under naked military rule. Norway, Denmark, and Holland have made it clear to the United States that they are not prepared to countenance continued NATO support of the Greek junta. The message to the United States is clear. If it settles on continued naked military rule for Greece, it may have to opt for Greece's withdrawal from NATO—and for strictly bilateral arrangements between itself and Greece. Such a development would completely scuttle Greece's associate membership in the Common Market, and would make Greece a direct economic problem for the United States. To Lon Nol's Cambodia and to Thieu's South Vietnam it would have to add the military junta's Greece. Not impossible, but difficult and, in any case, unde-

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sirable. Yet Greece is strategically terribly important to the Americans. With thirteen major U.S. nuclear, military, air, naval, and intelligence bases, Greece has become the key staging area for American control in the Eastern Mediterranean and for intervention, when needed, in the oil-rich Middle East.

The avant-garde role of the Greek youth in the liberation movement—its commitment, its militancy, and its sacrifices—is quite remarkable, for one must keep in mind that the university students were not much more than fifteen years old when the colonels took power. It is not sufficient, of course, to explain the phenomenon by pointing to the obvious fact that university youth has played an important role in all the radical movements of our era. One could almost argue that the “social memory” of the Civil War, of that historic struggle of the Greek people for independence and socialism—which was undermined by a dependent and dogmatic leadership and crushed by British and American imperialism—lingers on. But surely there is more than this. The student movement has found a deep and strong response among the working people of Greece. Without this response the November uprising would have remained just a student demonstration.

The students have articulated effectively the nature of the Greek problem and the character of the struggle ahead. Their positions are consistent with those of a broad spectrum of resistance groups that are increasingly coordinating their actions around two simple central themes—national independence and socialism. This—and their courage—explains the mass support they received in November. Naturally, the uprising was not entirely spontaneous, nor was it unconnected with resistance organizations. But the ratio of organized to spontaneous participants on November 16 was one to five hundred. This shows at once both the strength and the weakness of the movement. And it defines the nature of the task that lies ahead.

But back to the basic unifying themes of the struggle—national independence and socialism. It has become clear in Greece by now that democracy is meaningless in the context of foreign domination, of covert foreign occupation, that popular sovereignty cannot be established without national independence.

For this reason the primary objective is national liberation—the ousting of the United States and NATO from Greece. But in this struggle, the dependent and comprador Greek bourgeoisie cannot be an ally of the workers, the peasants, the students, the professionals; and now not even of the Greek petty bourgeoisie, for the bourgeoisie is the domestic instrument of foreign domination. This imparts to the struggle its second characteristic. It turns it into a struggle against the capitalist structure of Greek society, into a struggle of the working people of Greece against imperialism, against American metropolitan and Greek peripheral capitalism.

There is unity among the freedom fighters in Greece. It is the unity which is being forged in the context of a genuinely socialist, anti-imperialist liberation movement. This unity was consolidated in the bloody confrontation of November. It constitutes the solid foundation on which the national liberation movement of the Greek people is being built.

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