

"Not in the 1968". The Greek university students rebellion in 1973 and its aftermath in the 2015 Greek multi-crisis.

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Abstract

In the 1973 November 17th the (Greek) Polytechnic University students did revolt. Comparing to other students' revolts across Europe and elsewhere this rebellion was delayed due to the military junta outburst in Greece in 1967 (which, apparently, restricted and restrained any political movements). Apart from the literature that either emphasizes on the political and ideological meanings of this uprising or on the negation of it, it seems interesting to search for its imprint in social attitude, given the 2010-2018 Greek multi-crisis and the many riots outburst, whereas the 62% "NO" in the "2015 bailout referendum" can be considered as a milestone of this social attitude and of the crisis as well.

This presentation aims to search the connections between (a) the "myth" behind the youth (and people's) resistance, which can be briefly mentioned as "*resistance culture*" along with the educational myths that cultivated this culture, and (b) the "anti...(anything)" movement and the following riots which devastated institutions and cities across Greece, particularly during this period of multi-crisis.

An historiographical and genealogical method will be used in order to reveal the roots of the societal attitude towards this "*resistance culture*". The Press and other Media as well as the school history curriculum could be considered as the historical data to proof these connections.

The highly ideologized perception of the past (which includes the "1973 November 17th" students' uprising) on behalf of certain political parties (or groups) and the social legitimization of this perception through school is expected to be emerged as a conclusion.

Keywords: students rebellion, junta, history curriculum, "resistance culture"

Cited as :

Foteinos, D. (2018). "Not in the 1968". The Greek university students rebellion in 1973 and its aftermath in the 2015 Greek multi-crisis. In Payà Rico, A., et al (Eds.) (2018). *Globalizing the student rebellion in the long '68*. Salamanca: FahrenHouse, pp. 159-167

1. (Greek) Mythologies and Histories (from 1945 to 1973 and beyond)

Since the WW-II was over a new war, a civil one, blasted in Greece (1945-9) right after the 1945 *Varkiza Agreement* – between the communist-driven Resistance guerrilla army and the quasi-official Greek government, to cease fire and grant amnesty to the guerrillas¹). Opponents in this war were the official State army (supported initially by the UK and the USA later on) on one side and on the other the remaining of the guerrilla army who previously fought in the resistance against the Nazi Occupation during the WW-II (supported by the illegal -that time- Communist Party of Greece). There is an ambivalent narrative on this war, but this ambiguity is the key-point to comprehend the historical narrative of post-war Greece till nowadays².

When the Civil War was ceased in 1949, the Greek society and economy after 10 years of fiercely warfare was developing again given the financial aid of the Marshall Plan. The right-wing

1 Before the 1945 Varkiza Agreement, a raw and cruel British intervention in Greek politics took place, known as the December Battle of Athens (1944). In this battle the intervened British powers did reinforce the roughly official Greek army troops (of a not yet legitimate government) fighting against the Communist driven Resistance guerrilla army. After this 1944 December Battle the superintending power of Greece changed with the intervention of the USA military and political agents (not only troops, but financial aid as well, under the Truman Dogma and Marshall Plan, indicated this shift of the superintending power on Greece). Nevertheless this can only be seen nowadays as a part of the early Cold War conflicts throughout Europe.

2 Indicatively, the Greek society, its historians and the academia, didn't discuss openly about the Civil War until the end of the 20th century (just in 1999, "celebrating" the 50 years the Civil War was ended, only a few conferences and some

party of that time came lawfully on power and established a legitimate government even though an era of “reinforced” or “iron” democracy was established (Alivizatos, 1983) throughout the 1950s (supposedly till the mid of 1960s, but this is an other issue). Trying to re-establish the post-civil war regime under a severe legislation the government imposed “silence” on the Civil war issue, maintaining nevertheless imprisoned and exiled almost all of the Civil war guerrillas, and excluding their supporters, their family members or anyone suspected to be of their adherents from the access to State’s public services (such as education, health care system, etc). Even till the mid of the ’60s, the right-wing government was determined to uphold the established order, despite calls for change.

Ever since, Civil war was never a part of the formal history narrative, was never mentioned in history school textbooks and was roughly mentioned in academic discussions. The stories and the narrative of the Civil war was predominantly written by historians or academics in quasi one sided publications eulogizing the “resistance” (Svoronos, 1999-a-b; Vournas, 1999) – initially against the Mussolini’s fascist army, later against the Nazi occupation and finally in Civil war against the roughly official Greek army troops of a not yet legitimate government.

Nevertheless, it seems to be of a historical paradox, the winners (of the 1945-9 Civil war) not having officially written the narration of their victory. In educational terms and as far it concerns the history textbooks, this is a part of a Null curriculum.

Seventeen years after the end of the Civil war, in 1967, a military coup established an extreme-right regime in Greece. There are a lot to be said about this coup, but keeping in track with “histories and mythologies” one should point the case of the American intervention. For years after the restoration of democracy this was a point of a high ideological and political conflict between the leftists and the rightists: the former accused the American foreign policy for intervene into Greek affairs by supporting the military coup while the latter balanced between “silence” (alike the “silence” for the Civil war) and “silently acceptance” of this foreign intervention – just a few of the rightists impeached the indigenous political parties and the politicians of that time for their plots and shenanigans. This conflict around the foreign (USA) intervention was decisively resolved when a former US Ambassador in Greece published a book acknowledging that the USA’s and the US Athens Embassy’s politics of that time empowered and facilitated the military officers to carry out the coup in 1967 (Keeley, 2010). This was a moral and political vindication for the Left, for all those years of criticizing and developing an anti-American (and hence, an anti-capitalistic, anti-statism, anti-banking, etc) attitude³ - something that was needed for the Lefts, since the Eastern World broke down in 1989.

Nevertheless, lefts or rights, all agreed that the 1973 students’ rebellion was a milestone towards the restoration of democracy one year later, in 1974 and it became the benchmark for the 3rd Democracy Period of the Greek Republic. Unsurprisingly, in history school textbooks the period of junta (1967-1974) and the 1973 students’ rebellion were not mentioned (until very recently, 2007), being part of the history’s Null curriculum.

2. The “resistance”, the written and the unwritten history and the Null curriculum

But what is the connection between the Civil war issue, the history Null curriculum⁴ and the case of the 1973 Greek students’ uprising and its imprint to present? Theorizing this case, the question concerns *the construction of a social and political identity through both the written and the unwritten history/histories*.

Analyzing the Greek history school textbooks one can find a lot examples of “resistance” – a modest way to say that the overall school history is a praise to “resisting Greeks”⁵, practically

publications took place). As part of this ambivalent narration of the Civil War see Calyvas and Marantzides (2016) and the relative discussion on this publication in Press.

3 This anti-American attitude was materialized in the annual “November 17th protest-march” on the US Embassy, stating the willing to resist against any threats to parliamentary democracy.

4 For the case of the Null Curriculum see briefly: Flinders, et.al., 1986.

5 There are a lot of examples, which are known worldwide: the battle in Marathon, the battle in Thermopylae, the naval battle in Salamis, etc. As it is claimed, *ex post facto* – implicitly or explicitly, exaggerating or not, the “resisting Greeks” saved the western civilization from the onslaughting and raiding barbarians of the east (namely the Persian

turning the school history into a war history. This *resistance worship* has its roots into two chronically irrelevant historical periods: the former is what can broadly be perceived as “*the Antiquity*” and the latter is the “*1821 War for Independence*” (liberation from the Ottoman Empire). Common and core characteristic for the narratives on these two periods is the “*struggles of Greeks*”, the “*resisting Greeks*” who fight against all odds to maintain freedom and preserve the civilization and their way of life; preserve the identity features which differentiated them from the neighborhood population.

These two periods place a certain, profound, strong and nonnegotiable meaning on identities and they legitimize the modern Greek nation-state. “*This is who we are*”, is the meaning, independent, eager to fight for our freedom and our way of life, protecting our long lasting values and traditions. Fighting for these, one becomes hero, a worth mentioning character whose name is not to be forgotten in times to come (as Achilles understands in Homer’s Iliad – and the 8yo pupils have to learn since the 3rd Grade). These two periods consist of the core element of the Greek national identity.

No need to mention that the Greek history school textbooks are full of heroic names. Acknowledging nevertheless the Byzantine (the Greek Medieval) period as the second one which provides profound elements to the modern Greek identity (namely the christian tradition), legitimizing equally the modern Greek nation-state, none can find some heroic names in this narrative, none can proclaim this period as an example; actually, this period, important nevertheless for the modern Greek identity -and for the Greek and European history, is almost never mentioned in public discussions and the names of Byzantine emperors and of great warriors are roughly remembered, since not great instances of resistance are presented into history textbooks. Truthfully there are a lot of resistance instances during the Byzantine period, but the religious -namely, the Christianity- narrative has a stronger impact in identity construction. Therefore, the resistance instances during the Byzantine period are not considered as such: Byzantine period is an important element into school history curriculum not for the resistance instances, but solely for religious matters.

Examining the “written history” in school textbooks one can discuss the Null history curriculum, which incorporates all the unwritten history, the uncomfortable silences imposed on school history textbooks and all the misinterpretations of history, written though in school history textbooks. Apart the Antiquity and the War for Independence, which both contain brilliant moments of glorious resistance, there are certain instances which are not mentioned in history school textbooks because they are not fitting at all into the national narration of the “*resisting Greeks*”. Notwithstanding the notion of resistance is a core one throughout the Greek history curriculum, it was never mentioned a moment of resistance on behalf of the Greek opponents, ie the resistance against Alexander’s invasion to the East. Neither has been mentioned the resistance displayed by the Turks in 1920-1, when the Greek army invaded deep into Ottoman’s Empire land and did onslaught arriving just 100km before Ankara.

Besides the Null curriculum in written history, one could claim that the unwritten history has also a major contribution in our perception of the past.

In our case, since the winners of the Civil war did not write the narrative of their victory, they let enough space to the defeated to shape an ideological field for confrontation on the Civil war issue. The notion of resistance was predominant in this narration. Regardless their defeat, regardless what really was at stake during the Civil war (the political turnover), the defeated (and their political descendants) presented themselves as undoubtedly defeated in warfare but morally and ethically winners, since they were *resisting* against all odds fighting against superior powers, and most of all, they were fighting for great ideals, such as freedom, equality, justice, etc. Through the unwritten history the involved parts in this war were rearranged as for the moral judgment of their participation⁶.

Empire). This claim though is justified enough, if one thinks of the Greek originated words and notions (s)he uses in every day's activities.

6 A practice called ‘social appropriation’ mechanism (McAdam et al, 2001).

The '60s in Greece were a troubled, either “long lasting” (Papanikolopoulos, 2008), or “brief” decade (Alivizatos, 2008). At the beginning of the '60s the right-wing party governed in an authoritarian manner. During these intense years a lot of demonstrations took place, demanding the democratic rules to be followed, less intervention to politics by the King⁷. In the mid of '60s, the center-wing party came in power, promising a lot to all. Soon, parliamentary activity became overwhelmingly biased and problematic and new elections were pronounced. But the military coup came before these elections (1967).

At first, the society was numbed and didn't react to claim democracy back. Gradually a few fragmentary and unsuccessful activities revealed a sense of resistance, while some activities did manage to internationalize the problem. The US financial support and the hard rules of the military regime (censorship, imprisonment, exiling, unspeakable tortures) prevented though further resistance instances. Despite censorship applied on the domestic Press, alternative networks were transferring to the Greek society uncensored news and the “new” culture. Within this political environment the Greeks learned about the new rock bands, the new trends and of course the turmoils and the students' uprisings in the US and European universities.

The regime realized the lack of legitimization into society due to the economic restrictions and hardship for the most and gradually after six years of political asphyxiation began to loose its stiffness, certain publications were permitted and a “transitional” political government succeeded the military administration in order to prepare elections as a process to restore the parliamentary democracy. Legislating for the students' affairs the regime decided to cancel the postponement for military servicing for those students who participate in students' political unions. Surprisingly, this was like a touchpaper for students and triggered universities' students demonstrations.

In 1973 November, students of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) did a sit-in and their message of resistance spread throughout Athens – a small radio broadcast station made by the students helped out to spread it faster. Soon thousands of people -the same people who were earlier semi-comfortable and looked unwilling to react, now flowed out in the streets and surrounded NTUA, supporting the students to their sit-in. To record the historical sequence, there was the invasion of a tank into the NTUA, and the sit-in was terminated. This resistance triggered a second military coup, from military officers who established a much harder regime and canceled the process of parliamentary democracy restoration. Within a few months this second military regime invaded to Cyprus to overturn the legitimate Cypriot government and establish a military regime. This brought about the Turkish reaction and the island is divided ever since. The military coup was terminated upon the “Cyprus tragedy”. Parliamentary democracy was restored and a few years later Greece entered the EU as a full member-state.

Unsurprisingly this incident of resistance against the military regime was not written in history school textbooks. Besides the unwritten history per se, what remains hidden as part of a Null curriculum is the true causes for the “1973 November” students' uprising. One could agree with the *1973 legislation on students' affairs* as a motive and indicate the lose of freedom as the cause for the uprising. Others could claim that students revolted only when their own interests where under question. Nevertheless, what is the actual Null history curriculum is that students' revolt didn't break down the military regime. A direct consequence of the 1973 students' revolt was a much harder dictatorship (and the Turkish invasion to Cyprus along with the tragedy that followed). Nevertheless the tragedies mentioned above what remains in social cognition as the imprint of the 1973 students' revolt is the public acknowledgment of a students' and society's resistance that brought the democracy back (Tsirides, 2017: 313). It's a form of social appropriation, given the numbness of society, an alibi for the inertia expressed for long time during the military regime (Tsirides, 2017: 315).

3. Bridging the past to present: the role of the “resistance culture”

The last 10 years Greece is under a multi-crisis. During this period a lot of demonstrations and other forms of “resistance” occurred, predominantly violent and destructive, against the imposed

⁷ Until 1973 Greece was a kingdom.

monetary and fiscal measures. Surprisingly, the public discussions around this crisis partly involved the guerrillas' disobedience to the "1945 Varkiza Agreement" and the "1973 November" students' revolt, as major resistance examples which ought to be followed. This negotiation on behalf of some social agencies or broad collectivities brings forth the relation between the written and the unwritten history and the Null curriculum.

In both of the cases -the Civil war and the 1973 Greek students' uprising- the core element is the notion of resistance, irrelevant to who resist against whom or what. This notion constructs a "culture of resistance" penetrating the society through the unwritten history and the Null history curriculum and it's legitimized through the written school history. For school history "resistance" carries a positive meaning, since this notion enhances the nation-state's narratives. It seems this resistance culture functions as a means of *technology for political domination* (Mouzelis, 1990; Kondylis, 2011). In this sense, the "resistance culture" legitimizes the action of resistance -or even its violence, regardless the causes or the consequences: resistance a priori maintains a positive quality even if one resists against his own state (this could explain up to a point the high levels of tax-evasion in Greece or the Greeks' eager not to conform to the law in any occasion).

For the rightists the notion of resistance is contained into the national narration, praising the glorious past through the written history and the resistance culture constructs the core element of their national identity for which they are overwhelmingly proud of.

For the leftists the notion of resistance regardless its historical roots is cultivated through the unwritten history and the Null history curriculum as part of their political agenda, part of the political-historical knowledge they ought to carry as a crucial tool to comprehend the past and transform the present (Koukee, 2015).

Notwithstanding the roots, the causes and the consequences of the "resistance culture", under this outbreak of memory due to current multi-crisis, one has to reconsider the national narratives beyond their cultivated myths and the narration of a misused history divided into the officially written, the unwritten and the Null curriculum history. Then, the comprehension of history as a means to produce the present and the future and not as a product to consume the past (Axelos, 2013) could be the trigger to overcome this multi-crisis.

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