

Declaration by Messrs Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, former Prime Minister, G. Mavros, J. Zighdis, P. Papaligouras, G. Kallis, former Ministers, and D. Papaspirou, former Speaker of the last Parliament, concerning the independence of the Universities, and the persecution of students

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In its desire to mislead internal and foreign opinion, the military regime invited Greek students, a year ago, to "question and discuss" public matters, and assume a responsible management of their own affairs through freely elected representatives.

The regime believed that by purging the staffs of the Universities after abolishing academic independence, by appointing "Government Commissioners" at the Universities, by delineating stifling limits to the activities permitted to students (S.g. the notorious Legislative Decree 93/69), the student body would either agree to, or be forced to, play the role of submissive collaborators of those in power, who were so eagerly endeavouring to create and project a "liberal" image of themselves.

But they were terribly mistaken. Greek youth refused to bow. On the contrary, within the narrow limits allowed to them, students have with courage, consistency, and reserve, struggled to exercise their inalienable rights.

The anger of the regime at having its intentions and schemes exposed, though expected, has been extremely sharp and blatant.

It was given free reign yesterday (there is no need to go to previous examples) during the appalling events and unprecedented violence that occurred at the expense of the students of the Polytechnic in the grounds of the School and even in the offices of the Chancellor. As a result the Senate of the School felt obliged bodily to resign.

But beyond the use of naked violence, the military regime has, over the last two days been resorting to even more repugnant methods. It has established white terror as the legal framework of student life. By L.D.1347 of 10.2.73 "Concerning the interruption of the suspension of the draft into the armed forces of students", the Minister of Defence is given the right to decide which young Greeks are allowed to complete their studies and which others not.

Which is to say that the Minister of Defence is given the right to condemn young Greeks to intellectual death according to his absolute will.

In totalitarian regimes, the laws provide some kind of legal framework for the ~~unbridled~~ unbridled exercise of violence and arbitrariness. But in this case not even this occurs. For, in the case of this law, which gives the Minister of Defence such dictatorial powers, there is no definition of the "offence" which can sentence a student to the extremest of penalties; no procedure for discovering the truth or falsehood of the alleged offence is established; the alleged offender is given no right to defend himself; the Minister's decision is final. The Minister, in fact, can condemn one student and not disturb another, though both may have committed the same offence.... In all this process, the jurisdiction of the University authorities is completely ignored. And, finally, the only substantial arbiter of the fate of students on Campus will inevitably be the lurking informer...

This is the law - the sword of damocles - that, since the day before yesterday, has been hanging over the heads of Greek students. It is an unprecedented legal monstrosity, which constitutes the negation of law, human rights, and the equality of citizens.

We denounce this wicked law to the Greek people, and we demand its immediate repeal. We also demand the immediate abolition of all those laws and administrative measures aimed at depriving the Universities of their independence.

Greek youth cannot be alienated from their fundamental rights, and be converted to being the servants of their dynasts. Let the regime not push the young into despair, for they will react decisively and proudly to safeguard their freedom and dignity, which are inseparably linked to their future - the future of the Nation.

Finally, we declare that the most miserable and nationally most damaging method of dealing with the free spirit of our youth, is to characterise all those students who actively express human pride, as communists.

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George Mavros  
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