

Chapter 5

Ten Months that Shook Greece

Chapter 5 chronicles the events that led to the clash between the students and the regime, reconstructing the ten-month countdown to the climax of the student movement and its ultimate suppression. Further, this chapter explores the processes put in motion at the peak of the Junta's "liberalization experiment" and the main public expressions of the student revolt: the November 1973 Polytechnic occupations in both Athens and Salonica and their forerunners, the Athens Law School occupations in February and March of the same year. The chapter closes with the aftermath of the Polytechnic, including the brief interregnum of the Ioannidis dictatorship and the abrupt passage to the postdictatorship period in the summer of 1974, the so-called *Metapolitefsi*. It traces the continuation of the student movement with its parallel radicalization and disintegration, this time under democratic conditions.

The 1973 Reforms and Student Radicalization

By 1973, the Colonels' regime was approaching the apogee of its liberalization experiment. Georgios Papadopoulos had decided to personalize the regime (serving as regent, prime minister, minister of foreign affairs, minister of defense, and minister of government policy) and to some extent to enforce the Constitution of 1968.¹ Beginning in late 1972 with a counseling committee, or "miniparliament," as it came to be known, Papadopoulos urged his trusted men to speed up the process of restoring some form of parliamentarism. The state's attitude to protest had meanwhile been wavering. In the beginning, always in line with the normalization experiment, protest policing—the barometer of the political opportunities available for social movements—was milder, a situation that favors the diffusion of protest.² In contrast to the period of "clandestinity," public space became the object of contestation. As students were denied a private space (any indoor assembly of three or more people was prohibited), public spaces such as squares and avenues became the territory of open confrontation, and students began to

favor collective action expressed in large demonstrations, gatherings, and clashes with the police.

The student movement acquired a greater following, higher visibility, and, occasionally, open support. This helped to render the conflict public, to turn it toward more successful forms of struggle, and ultimately to fuse it into a movement. During this time, the notorious Security Police were actively trying to decipher the mechanism of student mobilization by arresting and torturing those identified as the main student agitators and leaders. Once it became obvious that there was serious potential within the movement, Junta authorities again resorted to extreme forms of public violence. Confrontations between students and police forces became increasingly brutal.

Although Greek students did not respond to state-sponsored violence with violence, they did not remain entirely passive. Part of their repertoire was verbally attacking the policemen. An *Economist* report from the period describes one such incident:

[T]his fairly parochial protest might have died down in a few days, but a government official (no one is certain who he was) sent squads of policemen to the campus to break up a meeting on the sub-engineer problem. Outraged by the “violation” of the university, students began taunting the invading cops with cries of “Fascists!” and “Gestapo!” For good measure, some also threw in two peculiarly Greek insults: *pustis*, meaning the passive partner in a homosexual relationship, and *malakas* (masturbator). The police responded by beating and dragging off a number of the student demonstrators; eleven of them were charged with “insulting authority.” Eight students were later found guilty and given eleven-month suspended sentences.³

What is interesting to note here is that the students’ confrontation with the police involved a performance of masculinity, not only on the side of the policemen, but notably on that of the activists as well—a tendency that has remained largely unaltered in terms of Greek protest culture up to the present day. Students habitually called policemen “Fascists,” “Nazis,” “lackeys,” “starved out,” and “sellouts.” They were often accused of spitting on police and of using a slogan that irritated their adversaries and which was to become a motto: “Eleftheria” [Freedom].

Frequent clashes with the police, charged with adrenaline and risk, acted as rites of initiation for students, a necessary step toward radicalization and immersion in the movement. Giannis Kourmoulakis, himself of a “national-minded” family, describes the different stages of initiation, including the passage from passivity to action:

We passed the phase of noninvolvement, energetic involvement, and nonintense politicization, as far as the Junta's years are concerned; we started entering some events actively and politically minded. They summoned us to the police, they gave us warnings, during the first phase what happened was what I'm telling you: "You are from a good family, why do you get in trouble?" and so forth. Then they called us to the police station "for a private matter." (Kourmoulakis, interview)

Clashes constituted an "expressive behavior," insofar as they tended to be ends in themselves: part of their objective was the constitution of a new identity on the part of the students.⁴ All testimonies stress that clashes were part of the everyday routine, a constant hide-and-seek. Dimitris Papachristos frames his decision to circulate a petition in the ASOEE School of Commerce in the context of his passage through the rite of conflict: "In any case they knew us. We had been caught; we had been beaten up; what more could they do to us?" (Papachristos, interview).

The twelve students of ASOEE who passed on the petition, a set of proposals on how to improve the functioning of the university, were summoned by the rector and were given severe warnings. In their plea, they talked about their need to be involved in the learning and educational processes in general, to prevent football and pool from monopolizing the media and "alienating the students' intellect," and to seek instead authentic knowledge:

Our destination is not to become low-range professionals, little screws with preconceived roles within the social system. We did not climb up to Higher Education in order to remain passive listeners to dry knowledge. . . . We do not ask for truth to be served ready to us. . . . Formalized thought and expression, the lack of any imagination, any personal structure, gives us the creeps. We are struggling to improve our intellectual forces, even with mistakes, even under pressure.⁵

Contrary to the petition, which was articulated in formal and scientific language, this outburst is a very authentic text, probably the only one produced by students and made public at the time. It encapsulates in a particularly clear manner students' anger toward an educational system that did not meet their expectations. The reference to football as an element of manipulation is a recurrent one, but the demand for participation in all educational processes and the students' indignation with the unimaginative and static aspects of Greek intellectual life were strikingly novel. The publica-

tion of the plea created an unprecedented wave of solidarity with the twelve and took the movement another step forward toward becoming a truly mass movement.

At the same time, regime supporters were expressing their disgust with those who mouthed their opinions without knowing the “real student issues” at stake. According to their accusations, the antiregime students were patronizing professional trade unionists with no real knowledge of student problems and only went to the refectory and the assemblies but never attended classes. The resigned student council of electrical engineers—students who had been appointed by the regime—went further in expressing its rejection of the politics of antiregime students, arguing that there were issues more vital to student well-being than “the abolition of the disciplinary council, US or European imperialism, the solidarity of the building workers and the creation of a climate of anarchy and unaccountability in the higher educational institutions.”⁶ The contrast between the two preceding discourses, with both antiregime and pro-regime students becoming increasingly outspoken in terms of their prerogatives, delineates the growing radicalization of the two opposing spheres within the student body that consolidated the abyssal chasm between them.

The Movement Gains Prestige

In late January 1973, several students confronted raiding policemen in the area of the Athens Polytechnic, an incident that came to be known as the “little Polytechnic.” Eleven were arrested and tried on several charges, including “insulting authority” and “teddyboyism.” The little Polytechnic took place as a result of the students’ decision to switch to the offensive: a student delegation had sent a memorandum to the rector of the Athens Polytechnic to inform him that students were struggling for intellectual freedom and academic dignity. The text concluded, “We struggle for the benefit of our nation.”⁷ Despite its careful wording, this text demonstrates the confidence that the students had in their “mission.” The regime’s immediate reaction was to stiffen its attitude by issuing decree 1347/73; it was the second decree authorizing the regime to forcefully conscript male students who acted in an “antinational” manner but the first one to be implemented.

In an unprecedented move, Polytechnic professors opted to oppose the decree. At the time, students were gathered in the courtyard of the Polytechnic staging an anti-Junta demonstration with slogans such as “Fascism shall not pass” and “Down with conscription.” The students began chanting “Torturers out” as the building was encircled by police. Police forces entered

the Polytechnic and beat the students, violating the asylum of the university and even attacking students inside professors' offices. Professors who dared oppose this behavior were equally harassed.⁸ This helps to explain why the trial of the eleven arrested students that took place from 16 to 19 February 1973 turned into a political event.

A number of prominent political figures who opposed the Junta took on the defense of the arrested students. As a result, the trial received immense publicity, probably contributing to its brevity and the students' ultimate escape from punishment. For the first time, pictures of students with bruises caused by police beatings appeared in the papers, contributing to the rise of sympathy for the combatant youth. As Susan Sontag notes in her seminal book *On Photography*, "photographs shock insofar as they show something novel."⁹ In the case of the beaten-up students the novelty lies in the fact that there was nothing banal about them: there was no familiarity of the public with such images, despite the clandestine press and the foreign reports, the dismissal of Greece from the Council of Europe on grounds of torture in 1969, and many people's first-hand experience of the regime's brutality. Above all, these photographs shocked the people who were not familiar with such practices or were reluctant to believe that the regime was indeed as harsh as some people were suggesting. More importantly, the faces of the students who were subjected to grievous bodily harm became, to quote Michel Foucault, the site of "political investment":¹⁰ the political investment of the entire antiregime sphere against an authoritarian regime that was all too willing to resort to coercion in order to assert its authority (in spite of its supposed liberalization).

Figure 5.1. An antiregime student, Makis Balaouras, during the "Trial of the Eleven", with visible evidence of police brutality on his face. The fact that this photo was allowed to be published by a magazine such as *Epikaira*, alongside other images of arrested students with bruises, shocked the public but also indicated the controversial nature of the regime's "controlled liberalization." (Courtesy Olga Balaoura)



During the trial, Emmanouil Tzannetis, a Polytechnic student accused of “teddyboyism” and misconduct against policemen, accused the police in his turn of excessive brutality: “I have been dragged by the hair, like Hector by Achilles.”¹¹ Apart from describing a violent scene, Tzannetis, by comparing himself to Hector, placed himself within a mythological paradigm with strong associational resonance. Elements of narcissism go hand-in-hand with violence and suffering in his graphic description. Long hair becomes a symbolic, almost heroic feature. As newspaper reports and student recollections confirm, it was a common police tactic to pull men and women alike by their hair. At the notorious “interview-interrogation” that the well-known television presenter and music producer of this period Nikos Mastorakis conducted with arrested students following the Polytechnic events that took place later on that year, one of the students stated bluntly on camera that his hair was cut off by policemen right after his arrest. Mastorakis, himself a long-haired man, expressed his great surprise.¹²

“Anything but May ’68”: The Law School Occupations

On 14 February 1973, on the eve of the “Trial of the Eleven”, the first occupation of the Law School took place as a protest against police brutality. Several student issues were put forward, following the standard strategy of the movement at the time, which favored “student” over “political” demands. The great publicity that the little Polytechnic had acquired contributed to the students’ decision to occupy the school, an event that lasted only a few hours. Still, the occupation was a qualitative leap for the movement, the result of growing radicalism and self-confidence, and Papadopoulos met it with a decisive move: 120 male students who were supposedly among the most active were given short notice that their suspension of military service for study reasons was no longer active and that they should appear in the army headquarters in order to “serve the patria.” Deputy Minister Pattakos commented that being drafted to serve in the Greek Army was not punishment but good training, and if the students were hard working, they could still manage to graduate earlier than others. “Real students should not fear anything,” he remarked.¹³ Military conscription was a severe penalty, however, as it violently interrupted student life, and the army as an institution was the direct extension of the Junta and everything that it represented.¹⁴ Compulsory drafting was being exercised at about the same time by the military regimes in Spain and, especially, Portugal, during its colonial wars in Africa.

The immediate student response was new mobilizations, this time to demand the return of the conscripted. The Junta’s decision to show a tough face

backfired when the draft threat proved to be a major rallying factor, just as it did in the United States during the Vietnam War. Moreover, the conscription of the Law School students acted as a springboard for the radicalization of the student movement, ensuring a lasting mobilization. Those who had been taken away acquired heroic status; their release became the standard objective of the whole movement. This pattern played out in the student mobilizations in Greece for the liberation of imprisoned and conscripted students under the slogan “Give us our brothers back!”¹⁵

Their action repertoire enriched by the experience of 14 February, anti-Junta students decided to remain inside the Law School building overnight the following week. On 21 February, some three thousand people barricaded themselves inside the Law School building in the center of Athens for about two days in an action organized by A-EFEE (and to a lesser extent by Rigas) and carried out mostly by law and humanities students. Physics and math students were by and large excluded because of the leftist character of their student leaders and their confrontational attitude, which aimed for the popular overthrow of the Junta. A-EFEE and Rigas wanted instead to restrict themselves to student demands, a focus that would soon be overtaken by the movement’s own dynamics.¹⁶ The student action was further enhanced by an occupation committee and a ritual: they made an oath that praised the student youth of Greece and rejected “the violence and terrorism” of the regime.¹⁷ Ioanna Karystiani records this moment as one of the most vivid in her memory, as she was the one who drafted the oath, though she describes the text as insignificant (Karystiani, interview). Ex-student militant and present-day analyst Olympios Dafermos writes that the oath was awkward and out of tune with the character of the occupation.¹⁸ The text referred to a relentless struggle on the part of the students for freedom and demanded the guarantee of asylum and the abolition of repressive laws. It further declared solidarity with the tormented students, rejected terrorization, and concluded: “Long live the student world of Greece.” This epic gesture had no clear-cut purpose, but its declaration added to the theatricality and symbolic charge of the practice of occupation.

In addition to drafting the oath, the students appeared on the building’s terrace, where they sang the classic *rizitiko* song “Xasteria” and shouted slogans about student matters, which soon turned to anti-Junta slogans despite the directives of the two main organizations behind the occupation. Karystiani recalls with emotion that it was on the Law School terrace that students wrote the first anti-American slogans, including “Americans Out.” For the first time, slogans such as “Down with the Junta” and “Democracy” were uttered publicly, aiming at more than one interlocutor—that is, at the police and all those who found themselves in the center of Athens. Similar slogans,

including “No to football,” were written on fliers and thrown down to the streets, and at some point large cartons marked with the letters F-R-E-E-D-O-M were placed along the terrace. This was the moment in which the students broke free from fear. Vera Damofli remembers:

It had never happened before during the dictatorship period that a building was occupied and [protesters] shouted “Down with the Junta,” “Long live Freedom,” and other slogans, sometimes far-out ones as well, which were thrown and people picked them up. Because, you know, in the beginning there was a directive that we shouldn’t say “Down with the Junta,” we should say “Freedom,” “Democratic Liberties,” “Student Rights” instead. (Damofli, interview)

Soon, passers-by stopped to look up at the rare and unexpected spectacle. Many stopped out of curiosity, others out of solidarity. They did not rush to go home but instead stayed to watch. When the students called for solidarity, some dared to shout, “We stand at your side!” Motorists honked their horns. Soon, an immense traffic jam had begun all over Sina, Panepistimiou, and Solonos Streets, marking the first participation—albeit indirect—of private citizens in a student event. Stavros Lygeros, a student leader of the leftist OSE, describes this atmosphere: “We are talking about a situation of being besieged—we did not even have food, if you can imagine—and the people below [on the streets] were worrying. They were waiting at the bus stops intentionally, as an expression of solidarity.” (Lygeros, interview). This was the moment in which the antiregime students ceased feeling like a “Generation of Robinsons,” to use historian Jean-Francois Sirinelli’s term, doomed to be isolated, with no one to hear or share their frustrations.¹⁹ Sociologist Anna Mantoglou quotes a student at the time who remembers this change with enthusiasm: “The people were supporting us . . . we knew it!”²⁰ Still, the Dutch reporter who covered the occupation recalls that people in the neighboring buildings were closing their windows from fear that they would be accused by the authorities of showing sympathy for the insurrectionists.²¹

In collective moments, people carry along their own expectations and frames. Stelios Kouloglou remembers that these moments brought with them a feeling of great uplift despite the relative deprivation caused by the lack of food and cigarette supplies. He describes the occupation experience as one of landing on a free island, a liberated space within an occupied city: “The best moments were when we went out to the terrace and talked, when we went out there. This was a niche of freedom, it was like being on a little island, which might have been encircled, but it was free—this is what I felt” (Kouloglou, interview). Damofli stresses that this was a most liberating mo-

ment after years of introversion. She imaginatively links freedom to a symbol from 1821, the Missolonghi, a Peloponnesian fortress where Greeks barricaded themselves in fear of the Ottomans and which was celebrated by nineteenth-century poet Dionysios Solomos in his unfinished poem “The Free Besieged”: “A very strong image that I have, and a feeling, was the night on the law terrace when I felt really free. Freedom. We were up there, and beneath us there were people gathering all around. So I felt free, but in a very intense way. . . . This was something, man, a Missolonghi, you know, in scare quotes. This was something” (Damofli, interview). The intensity of feeling also reflected the fact that all these students were about to sleep overnight away from their homes—a new experience, especially for the women.

The strongest memory that *Katerina retains is of a strange, nonverbal communication code, which included a romantic evocation of exponents of the so-called Generation of the ’30s, such as George Seferis, and the latter’s icons, such as General Makrigiannis:

It is a bit picturesque. There was the sleep-in inside an auditorium. Most of us didn’t know each other, we were from various faculties, and most of us were snoozing on benches, on chairs, on tiers, and every now and then someone would stand up, anonymously from the crowd, and would write with chalk on the blackboard a verse of Seferis, something by Makrigiannis, don’t think it was anything extreme, and then without saying her name, without saying anything she would return to her seat. It was the triumph of allusion again, which, however, said more than would a ten-minute oration, a stump speech. I’m telling you this was a very temperate, condensed way of communication. (*Katerina, interview)

The references to Makrigiannis, Seferis, as well as Solomos, indeed lacked any “extreme” content and rather seem very much aligned with the standard literary prototypes of previous generations. On top of this, according to some testimonies dissident students danced Greek folk dances in the Law School terrace during the occupation. Such features compromised the iconoclastic aura of the whole event. In the end, radical student action could go hand-in-hand with well-established ideas and standard practices regarding “Greekness.”

The Law School occupation also marked the first appearance of a small group of anarchists. Nikos Balis and Christos Konstantinidis, in particular, were leading anarchists, who were not students but militant intellectuals with Parisian training. They were the first to translate Daniel Cohn-Bendit’s *Leftism* and Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* in 1972. Their journal *Pe-*

zodromio [The Gutter] was the first forum in which situationism was introduced to the Greek audience.²² In his political autobiography student leader Nikos Bistis offers a very graphic description of how the communist majority, to which he belonged, treated anarchists like Konstantinidis during the occupation: with suspicion, condescension, and contempt.

The order watch had identified a strange fellow, who dwelled for days amongst the Cretan students and was pretending to be an anarchist. He had all the external features, but there was something about him that bothered us: not so much what he was saying ... , but the way in which he was saying it. It was as if he had learned a poem by heart. His gaze was harsh, it did not have the romantic naiveté of the passionate ideologues, the anarchists of the '70s. But above all he stank. Anarchists have taken a divorce from reason, but not from soap. So this gentleman, called Konstantinidis, was going around the corridors, selling revolution and scaring people. "Be ready, there will be bloodshed, because they will storm in for sure. They might come in any minute now," he was saying gathering people around him, pretending to be a guru. Some were ready to follow him in the sacrifice, but most people froze, and you could see the fear in their eyes. Ad hoc people's court, and the verdict was carried out nevertheless. We isolated him on the first floor, we dragged him to the door and we threw him out before his newly baptized disciples realized what had happened to the prophet.²³

Bistis ends this passage by concluding that Konstantinidis was surely a provocateur. This story underlines the physical intimidation, but even more, the discursive violence that was exercised by the hegemonic communist side over a few anarchists—a symbolic violence that has survived overtime, making inroads into Bistis's present-day memoirs.

During the evening, many of the people who stood outside the Law School staged a demonstration in solidarity across nearby Akadimias Street. The demonstrators held candles in Coca-Cola bottles in an unlikely, albeit functional, combination of antiregime sentiment, Orthodoxy, and the most recognizable American consumer product (this in spite of their critical attitude towards the US government). All this time, a mass of EKOF students was trying to force open the gates of the Law School to enter the building, despite shouts of disavowal from surrounding students and backers of the occupation. EKOF's aggressiveness is glossed over in police reports of the period, which exaggerate the intention of the barricaded students to use violence. Accordingly, an ESA lieutenant observed: "During the meeting of the

22 and 23–2–73, the students barricaded inside the building were spreading the rumor that they were armed and that lots of blood was going to be spilled if other people tried to enter the building. Indeed, many of them carried daggers, while women students carried design razorblades (which have a switchblade, capable of causing serious wounds), which they demonstrated threateningly to the national-minded students.”²⁴

By its own standards, the regime showed great self-control. Both the movement and the authorities were testing their limits. Professors sided with the students. Konstantinos Toundas, the dean of the University of Athens, offered the students assurances that they could leave unharmed and guaranteed them water and electricity until they evacuated the building. The students rejected this offer, however, as well as the University Senate’s request that they leave peacefully. Instead, the occupiers insisted on the abolition of decree 1347 and expressed distrust regarding police guarantees.

On the second day of the occupation, things gradually changed, as many tired students decided to leave; indeed, some had been largely unprepared for a venture requiring such stamina. Most people in the occupation did not really know what their roles or aims were. Student leader Giorgos Vernikos illustrates this point in his writings, conveying with evident irony an image that largely deconstructs the “heroic” aura of the events: “Others were hungry, others got ill, others had their mom waiting, others were afraid.”²⁵ As the dean had already promised to seek the withdrawal of the notorious decree within ten days and the recognition by the Senate of the councils elected by the students, the occupation committee decided to lead the students out of the building. This act was seen as a “victorious withdrawal” with great symbolic impact, though the conscriptions did not cease after all.

The Law School occupation marked the synchronization of the Greek student movement with the international one. The occupation, a newly imported practice in Greece, reflected practices of ’68 and proved to be a powerful weapon in the hands of Greek students, who realized that concentrating their strength in a building could be more feasible and effective than a large open-air gathering. On 22 February, when Greek papers reported on the Law School occupation, they also cited the University of Barcelona as a “theater of student unrest,” as well as “demonstrations of thousands of students in British cities,” “students in Milan participating in illegal demonstrations,” and “confrontations between police and students in Cairo.”²⁶ In other words, 1973 was clearly another student year: from Barcelona to Milan and from London to Cairo, the student unrest was a globalized and constant phenomenon. Despite the contextual differences, the Greek uprising—at its height by this date—could finally be placed within this transnational context.

In parallel to the Athens occupation, some three thousand students gathered in Salonica outside the physics and math faculty in order to discuss the invitation of the appointed commission of Aristoteleion University, but they did not manage to conduct open talks. This was the largest meeting of anti-Junta students in the seven years of the dictatorship. The incident was marked by savage fighting between pro-regime and antiregime students. Student leader Chrysafis Iordanoglou justly castigates the otherwise accurate *Thessaloniki's* lack of information on the extreme violence committed by EKOF's members, thanks to the authorities' intervention (Iordanoglou, interview). Many students were injured, some brought to the hospital, and others pressed charges in the following days, again using and upending the very system that oppressed them in order to obtain justice. The Polytechnic was shut down, and lessons were suspended for about three weeks (from 26 February through 14 March) in order to appease students:²⁷ a snowball effect was taking place in Salonica, too.

Despite its tactical retreat, the regime showed particular brutality right after the Law School events. Given the extensive media coverage of the occupation, Stylianos Pattakos threatened to close down any newspaper that promoted student issues from that time on. In his infamous talk to the University Senate, Georgios Papadopoulos took over the task of aligning professors with the regime. He contemptuously remarked: "Go stand in front of the mirror and have a look at your heads, because if they are not white they are grey. Think about your struggles until the present day, analyze your personality as teachers of the nation, and with consistency to yourselves, sirs, respond: is it possible that you cannot control your students? I don't believe it." In addition to intimidating the professors, Papadopoulos rendered them responsible for the student situation, assuring them that he would not intervene except at their request. He clarified that "nonstudent" demands would not be tolerated, but he committed to satisfy all student needs.²⁸

Furthermore, Papadopoulos demonstrated a great lack of understanding of the real situation as he sought scapegoats by identifying outsider groups as responsible for the student unrest, identifying a retired officer as the leader of the Law School occupation and four communist students from Salonica as having forced the rest of the students to stay inside the building. He concluded that he would be ruthless if "riots and anarchy" persisted: "I will not allow anyone to set Greek society ablaze. I am well aware of the headquarters of ex-politicians and certain others who directed the student agitation and if necessary I will crush them."²⁹ At the same time, the education minister, Nikolaos Gandonas, was quick to announce new student loans, using the carrot and stick approach. In a change of mood, the recently considerate

professors now sided with the regime in an attempt to appease the dictators' rage. They called for the students to cease their strikes, proclaiming that the university asylum and the independence of higher institutions were guaranteed but announcing that student gatherings would not be permitted on university premises.

The students' morale, however, boosted by their recent "outing," rendered them more demanding than before. Law school and humanities students continued to abstain from lectures and asked for a permit to hold a general assembly, opposing the ban on gatherings. At the same time that fifty thousand students were striking in Barcelona at Spain's largest university—unrest the authorities blamed on leftist groups—a high percentage of students abstained from the progress exams at the University of Salonica, especially in the department of architecture. In a resolution handed to the rector of the Athens Law School, a commission of students insisted that the general assemblies were the only way to bring the authorities in touch with the students: "General assemblies strengthen the dialogue on a democratic basis and set up the foundations for creating the recognition that students are socially thinking individuals."³⁰

By contrast, in a telling article entitled "Anything but May '68," a French correspondent who reported the Law School events for *Le Monde* came to the conclusion that the Greek student movement was miles away from its counterparts abroad, and especially from the French agitators of the *événements*. The description he gave of a Greek woman militant was full of references to the fact that Greek students were mainly asking for basic rights, trying to separate their demands from further political vindications:

They were fourteen or fifteen years old when the military took power in Greece on 21 April 1967. They have only a vague recollection of the disorders from the democratic period. Nevertheless, it is while screaming "Democracy!" that these students descend to the streets and confront the Colonels' police. The latter is searching for the "Communist leaders" that Mr Papadopoulos denounced with virulence in a long speech on March 2. Swarthy, with big round glasses, chewing gum while smoking. On 16 February, in the scuffle at the Law Faculty of Athens, she received a blow of bludgeons that has left her with eyesight problems even today: "We have not even heard Papadopoulos's speech. He does not talk about the things we're interested in." Very little politicized, she refuses to see anything in her action other than a protest against the "brutes," the counterdemonstrators, nationalist students, and plainclothes policemen who ...

have insulted and beat her since the moment that she left the faculty: “They are the ones who provoked the scuffle. We just wanted our elementary rights.”

Later on in the article, the French commentator unfavorably compared an unspecified unaffiliated Greek leader—probably Vernikos—to Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the *enfant terrible* of May 1968, pointing to the Greek leader’s apparent lack of passion. In focusing on this specific unaffiliated student, the journalist underplayed the importance and influence of the communist groupings, to which most students belonged by that point. The French journalist noted:

A law student with a big black moustache that poorly hides his still-juvenile lips. George attempts to analyze the revolt: “All we want, the rest of us students, is to show that the government doesn’t accept even elementary demands such as the right to freely choose our representatives.” When questioned about his political views, he says “I am a left-winger,” pulling a face that excuses himself. Nothing in him of a strident Cohn-Bendit who was spitting vitriol at all sorts of requisitions. This is one of the “thinkers” behind the event, whereby leftists or Communists play a rather oblique role. “Naturally, the leftists have tried ‘to politicize,’ as they call it, the Law School occupation by making us shout: ‘Down with the Junta!’ ... But the majority refused and shouted instead ‘Democracy!’ ‘Freedom!’ and then he sings the Cretan song ‘When will the dawn come!’”³¹

In contrast to *Le Monde’s* emphasis on the differences between the Greek and French cases, almost a week earlier, on 27 February, *Thessaloniki* had noted that “the recent student unrest” recalled “the French May of ’68.” While the headline referred to the student protest against the Debrais Law in France, it made indirect reference to the Greek student revolt.³² At the same time, the president of the Free University of West Berlin expressed his support for the demands of the Greek students and his solidarity with the Senate of the Polytechnic. The president of the Student Union at the University of California, Berkeley, also expressed his solidarity with the demands of Greek students. This was a sign that the student conflict was being globalized and that despite *Le Monde’s* commentaries the post-’68 movements now looked to Greece: two of the hotbeds of student action were expressing their solidarity, Athens was finally heard, and the students were breaking their isolation.

After the Law School debacle, the dictators made it clear that they would resort to ruthless force to suppress similar incidents of protest. From this point on, however, more state violence would only produce more radicaliza-

tion among the rebellious students. The recent successful experiment with occupation and the open popular support it had received created greater expectations on the part of the students, which made them less cautious. The Law School imbroglio led to more marches and demonstrations by students in Athens, often very combative ones. Ariadni Alavanou remembers that participating in such ventures had become her daily occupation: “We were always up for it! Do you know this? Such was our mentality in that period. Wherever there was an occupation, a demonstration, fuzz, we were in for it” (Alvanou, interview).

Already at the beginning of March 1973, police reports reflected the fears of the authorities that the next occupation was going to last longer due to the students’ greater experience and enhanced organizational capacity: “It is being spread among the students that during the all-students meeting on Tuesday (6–3–73) those present will have food supplies for a week.”³⁶ The next occupation did not take place when the authorities expected it but was launched two weeks later, on the one-month anniversary of the February events. This time, those mainly responsible for the initiative were the leftists, who insisted that the correct tactic was to seek a head-on confrontation with the regime. Kouloglou remembers, “I insisted that we had to remain there, but this was entirely spontaneous. We should do something. We have had a victory here, so we should do something more, out of impatience, in a way” (Kouloglou, interview).



Figure 5.2. Students barricaded at the terrace of the Law School building, Athens, March 1973. Notice the growing visibility of women among the protesters, partly due to the forced conscription of their male peers. (Photographer: Aristotelis Sarrikostas)

One of the protagonists of this new occupation of the Law School, Grigoris Kossyvakis, recalled in an interview taken shortly after the fall of the Junta: “At 4 o’clock a meeting took place at the Saripolos lecture theater. At that meeting the AASPE—the Chinese, as we called them—was in charge of coordination for the first time. Their representative, Dionysis Mavrogenis, stated that the committee of physics and math students was about to take over the building, regardless of whether the remaining faculty committees departed. Naturally, the other committees did not depart.”³⁷ The occupation did not last long, as the university authorities asked for the intervention of the police, who invaded the Law School building, beating all the students. Most people who participated in those critical events retain very grim memories of the excessive violence used by the police—above all Angeliki Xydi remembered being “just saved from death” (Xydi, interview).

As political scientist Joachim Raschke argues, macrosocial conditions, or “dramatic events,” can accelerate, retard, or break up the mobilization process, becoming full-fledged factors in the unfolding of a protest movement.³³ Pierre Bourdieu also argues for the innovative role of “critical events,” which generate or result from general crises, with no relation to each other, casually bringing about a “synchronization effect.”³⁴ In the Greek case, the events that marked the evolution of the student movement were the February and March 1973 Law School occupations, which fortified the students and widened their circles of support. The movement was already underway, having carved out a public space, an “opportunity structure,”³⁵ for the reinforcement of student cohesion. The Law School occupations was the turning point for the course of the events in Greece, just as the June 1967 killing of high school student Benno Ohnesorg in Berlin accelerated student agitation in West Germany, and the May 1968 “night of the barricades” led to the explosion of the *événements* in Paris.

The Greek Junta proved myopic, taken by surprise by the sudden rise of the student movement, having paid little or no attention to problems within educational institutions and the contagiousness of the protests in Europe and the United States. The ruthless suppression of the second Law School occupation just reinforced an entire cycle of protest that would end with the dramatic Polytechnic events half a year later. The open, brutal violence exercised by the police and experienced by the students was a radicalizing factor, reinforcing the students’ potential for confrontation.

The first half of 1973 showed that apart from the students, others were also running out of patience with the regime. The self-exiled former prime minister Constantine Karamanlis heightened the tension when he released a statement in 23 April 1973 asking for an immediate transfer of power to the politicians. The dictators were also testing the patience of certain elites

in the country, including several sections within the armed forces, a fact expressed bluntly in a mutiny within the Navy in late May 1973. The mutiny, organized by royalist officers, failed but managed to shake the regime;³⁸ for the first time since December 1967 and King Constantine's abortive counter-coup, a branch of the country's armed forces questioned the dictators' legitimacy. Reports about the arrested navy officers being brutally tortured in the dungeons of the notorious Interrogation Units of the Military Police (EAT-ESA) caused sensation at the time.

The Cost of Participation

Greek student protesters acted in the context of an authoritarian regime that maintained order through violence. A distinction should be made between students' willingness to participate in moderate versus militant forms of action, as well as in low- versus high-risk activities, due to the potentially high cost of certain forms of protest.³⁹ Still, it would be wrong to assume that the cost of clandestine action was significantly greater than that of open action, because the dangers, including prison and torture, were similar. Open action had the possibility of tangible results, however, which would be more visible than the results of covert actions. Open action was also dictated by specific, rather than abstract, demands, such as university unionism. Overall, participation in protest or resistance had a high cost in Greece, in contrast to Western countries where "resistance" meant street fighting with the police until arrested. Greater repression also led to the reinforcement of a common identity.⁴⁰ Stavros Lygeros suggests the unifying quality of high-risk resistance: "It was not like when you pass by a demonstration at present, or an occupation. . . . This was a different thing, because risk was involved, they participated with risk. This thing marked it. It gave a nuance of gravity and drama to the whole movement" (Lygeros, interview).

Even as it was liberalizing in some ways, the regime resorted to violence to crush the presumed heads of the student movement, ignoring its polycephalous character. In spring 1973, two waves of arrests took place in which all the male student leaders who had not already been arrested or conscripted, along with some of the legendary women student leaders, were put in solitary confinement and tortured. The regime started using terror against the students when the ESA took over responsibility for addressing the student movement from the Public Security Forces, who had been blamed for failing to control it.⁴¹ By 1972, a fifth of the 330 prisoners serving sentences for crimes against the regime were students.⁴² On 8 May 1973, all identifiable leaders and those who defended them were arrested and tortured by

the ESA. A civil war veteran commented to a foreign journalist: “They don’t bother torturing us older communists, although they may knock us about a bit and make us feel impotent and helpless. They torture the young mainly. They want to break them.”⁴³

One of the most prominent members of the Law School occupations who got arrested on 8 May was Ioanna Karystiani, president of the Cretan Society and one of the most charismatic leaders of the movement. She argues that anyone who entered the movement knew well in advance that high and unpredictable risks were involved: “The ones who entered [the movement] knew that they were possibly taking a great risk of having, say, certain consequences, to be beaten up, to go to jail, and then to go to jail meant to be aware that they might charge you with Law 375, Law 509 on espionage [the anticommunist legislation introduced in the late 1940s], and if you were there in the front, you’d be given twenty years of prison.” (Karystiani, interview).

Student leader Giorgos Vernikos was also arrested and tortured by the Military Police. In his view, he was tortured particularly harshly due to his upper-class background and his torturers’ conviction that they were conducting a “popular struggle.” He quotes his interrogator telling him, “We are struggling for the nation-saving revolution and you spoiled brats and rich kids are fomenting resistance.”⁴⁴ As a result of physical and psychological mistreatment, Vernikos came close to suicide.

ESA was notorious for accompanying complete isolation and interrogation with ruthless torture; it relied heavily on the *falanga*, that is, beating prisoners with iron rods on the soles of the feet with their hands tied. Most of the time, interrogation served as nothing more than an opportunity to perform acts of domination on the prisoners. As the days people spent in the Military Prison were full of physical pain and psychological pressure, such a *rite de passage* gave its victims a credential. Dimitris Papachristos remembers, “We admired someone who returned from arrest on his feet; he had acquired prestige.”⁴⁵

Torture and psychological violence were even more intense for women due to the propensity of torturers to rape and to subject women to verbal assault with a sexual content. Xydi remembers: “It happened to me during a transfer from EAT-ESA to a military camp, to be taken out to the yard where there were colonels, the ones who were later on court-martialed of course, and all the EAT roosters gathered there, saying to me: ‘Why did you get involved? Go back to your kitchen to wash your dishes’” (Xydi, interview). A twenty-two-year-old woman who was arrested during the demonstration of 4 November 1973 on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of George Papandreou’s death told a foreign paper: “Policemen took hold of me, beat

me on my private parts, and put me in a police car. One of them told me, ‘We will put a black man in your cell to —— you.’”⁴⁶

The use of deliberately and stereotypically sexist and offensive language was a standard means of humiliation and dehumanization. Tasos Darveris records one of the phrases capturing this spirit of hate mixed with a rapist drive: military officers during the Polytechnic uprising remarked, “We should take all the women students and tear their cunts apart with bayonets.”⁴⁷ Accounts of direct sexual assaults are largely silenced in the verbal and written life stories of both male and female students of the time, however. The memoir of the young actress Kitty Arseni, written and published when she was already abroad, offers one example. Arseni described her extensive detention in detail for the most part, but she merely implied her rape without ever explicitly referring to it.⁴⁸ Christina Vervenioti was arrested and ruthlessly tortured by the Security Police while pregnant:

Some days before I got caught I realized that I was pregnant. I was already together with my husband then, we were both students, and I was in trouble at home for all this. And of course I would go and have an abortion. When they were torturing me I didn’t know that I had to say “Don’t hit me because I am pregnant” and they would spare me the beatings, as another girl did whose mother had been exiled and so on, and so she knew that she had to act this way. I didn’t say anything. On the contrary my concern was that my father shouldn’t know about it, as that thing would have been a greater blow than being arrested. At the end of the day, they caught me because I was working against the dictatorship. Father would not be ashamed of this. While about having a baby in such a way ... he had different principles, although he was very open-minded. (Vervenioti, interview)

Vervenioti’s recollection provides a graphic description of the ethics of the time, as her personal suffering was reinforced by her fear for the “shame” that an illegitimate child would cause her family. She nevertheless presents her father as quite open-minded, drawing a distinction between his attitude on “private” issues versus “public” ones. Though Vervenioti regrets not informing her torturers of her pregnancy in the hope of sparing herself some physical abuse, other incidents suggest that this would not necessarily have led to a more lenient treatment.

In the case of torture and its subsequent trauma, memories are often so poignant that narration becomes extremely difficult and sometimes impossible. More than once, when the life-story narration touched on an incident

such as interrogation and torture, interviewees wished to continue speaking off the record, suggesting that making such a story public would degrade and humiliate them. In other cases, narration seemed to be part of a healing process, despite the trauma's long-lasting effects.⁴⁹ Alkis Rigos remembers the isolation and the impossibility of forgetting: "No, it is not claustrophobia. It is not the closed walls, it is ... the parting from the world, the violent parting from everything that exists, and I talk about the isolation cell. You were on your own. Entirely. Absolutely. These are sensations which remain with you ... forever" (Rigos, interview).

A notable theme in the narratives of imprisonment and torture is the division between those who "talked" during interrogation and those who did not.⁵⁰ This reflects an honor code of sorts and reveals something of the value system of the students of the time. Xydi attributes her refusal to talk to her determination. She explains that the visual image she had in her mind while in prison was one of emerging from captivity proud of having maintained her integrity: "It was very cold, outside and inside. Externally and internally. [I had] this determination, a determination that has followed me ever since. That I should withstand the interrogation and that I should go out holding my head high, in order to be able to look my comrades in the eye" (Xydi, interview). She asserted that the very thought of her comrades was a strong incentive for her to withstand and survive what she went through in prison, suggesting the comfort she took from collective belonging. This thought and the bodily memory of isolation made her break into tears, during the interview. For Xydi, the "collective experience" that Luisa Passerini describes as accompanying a "fatal sacrifice" was very much present.⁵¹

By contrast, unaffiliated students tend to attribute their greater frustration during their hours in prison to the fact that they did not have a collective structure, such as an organization or a party, in their mind: "The feeling of loss, the solitude, you didn't have anything to lean on. We had yet another handicap, we didn't have comrades. I did not see anything I could lean on, I had nothing to defend, no comrade to avoid betraying, I didn't have anything. This is why I remained in jail briefly, this is why I was probably tortured less than others" (Kourmoulakis, interview). The stakes were high for imprisoned students, whether they turned their comrades in or not. Most worked out individual strategies for dealing with their torturers, such as giving names of companions who were abroad or of persons who were already known or imprisoned. Despite the passage of time, distance, and the mental processing that accompanies them, Christina Vervenioti could not conceal her contempt for those who turned her in: "I was very much disturbed by the fact that they had talked. It disturbed me that so many kids were brought there after us. They could have stopped with us, without bringing in the rest

of the kids.” Later on, Vervenioti lamented that her group was small and inexperienced as compared to the depth and expertise of the Communist Party, a view that also marked her latter-day political choices:

Maybe I was all tough toward them [the other members of her group]. They were older than me, supposedly more into, further up in the organization, and I expected better from them, that they wouldn’t talk. They said it all, with the logic that they [the police] already knew everything, as we were all there. And they gave details. . . . I said, “Never again be involved in a small group.” You should offer your life, do things, but at least there should be a party behind [you], a serious mechanism. I believed this, that there was no seriousness, they played at revolutionaries without being such. (Vervenioti, interview).

Kleopatra Papageorgiou similarly shows little respect for those who talked: “You see how the organizations collapsed, the clandestine ones when A-EFEE people got arrested. They gave into everything, they squealed, they ratted on everyone when they got caught. That’s it, better not say names now. I know them, but let them be for the time being” (Papageorgiou, interview).

Giannis Kourmoulakis finds himself at the opposite end of the spectrum, as he recalls in despair the fact that he was forced to speak: “I think that they broke my spirit, despite all resistance. That is, I got scared. I did not say ‘Fuck off, I’m not writing anything.’ I sat down and wrote. What did I write? I sat down and wrote. It doesn’t matter what I wrote, if I turned people in, if I didn’t turn people in. I got scared—they broke my spirit—that they might kill me, that they might throw me out of the window” (Kourmoulakis, interview). Such coerced confessional writings reminded many of the notorious “statements,” documents renouncing left-wing political beliefs that had been a thorn in the side of the Left ever since the interwar period. Consequently, a large number of people were stigmatized as traitors.

Makis Paraskevopoulos, a law student and Rigas member, wrote an account shortly after his long detention wherein, alongside a stirring description of his state of mind, he referred to the images of the relentless fighters of the Civil War years that came to haunt him: “You’re always in your cell and the shortness of breath is inevitable. Terror has become a steady feature and at every sound you’re scared to death. You’re constantly trembling, so much that you’re spilling the beans from your spoon, you are floundering in your words, you are incredibly cowardly, the most cowardly man in the world, and the people in Makronisos were made out of stone.”⁵² Kotanidis in his memoirs offers a similar testimony regarding the mythical courage of

the fighters of the past and how they induced a sense of guilt regarding his own stance towards his torturers: “As if my sorry state was not enough, I kept on burdening myself with guilt.” At a certain point he wonders: “What should I expect from myself, to be tough like Stalin? Probably.”⁵³ Both Paraskevopoulos’s idealized story of resilience about the left-wing inmates of the notorious “rehabilitation” camp on the island of Makronisos in the late 1940s⁵⁴ and Kotanidis’s reference to Stalin demonstrate an internalization of the Greek communist moral standards of the past, according to which a “fighter” would never yield in duress.

A “Glocal” Movement

Papadopoulos meanwhile proceeded to implement the final steps of “liberalization,” including the granting of a spectacular and full-fledged amnesty. He could have issued a pardon in order to satisfy criticism from abroad, mainly from the United States. Instead, he gave an amnesty that cancelled the criminal records of the accused. He further lifted the “state of siege” from the whole country and recognized all individual and collective freedoms for the first time since 1967.⁵⁵ Papadopoulos’s decision to politicize and personalize the dictatorship—he concentrated so many powers in his hands that one could talk of “sultanism”⁵⁶—greatly dissatisfied the hard-liners of the regime who thought that the “Revolution of 21 April” was being betrayed.⁵⁷ However, the regime’s strong man was determined to accomplish his plan, as his attempts at *reforma* had been twice frustrated by the hard-liners in the past (1968 and 1971).

Papadopoulos also organized a referendum on the abolition of monarchy on the grounds that the exiled monarch had allegedly orchestrated the naval mutiny of May 1973, alongside the Paris based ex-prime minister Constantine Karamanlis. The referendum, which took place on 29 July 1973, gave Papadopoulos a 78.4 percent approval and made him the first president of the Republic. It caused great splits within the clandestine Left and the politicians of the predictatorship period, as did the announcement of forthcoming elections.⁵⁸ More importantly, on 8 October 1973 Papadopoulos moved for the first time to create a government around the old liberal politician Spyros Markezinis and other political figures from the past, the “interlocutors” or “bridge-builders” who were willing to engage in a dialogue with the Junta and take governmental positions.

Markezinis appeared to desire appeasement with the “student problem” and the fact that the students who protested in spring 1973 for the improvement of academic matters and more academic freedom had met with sup-



Figure 5.3. Junta’s amnesty, summer of 1973. Political prisoners are returning home by boat from the remote islands to which they had been sent into exile. On their way out many praised the role of the students as a catalyst for their release. (Photographer: Aristotelis Sarrikostas)

pression, violence, arrests, and the suspension of their right to defer military service. The situation in October 1973 could not be compared to that of the spring of the same year, he said, when the “political question” (το πολιτικόν ζήτημα) was still open, reinforcing the unrest. He was confident that the liberalization process by now ought to have reassured the students, allowing reconsideration of their problems. Still, he said in an interview with the *New York Times*, “This does not mean that the channel of elections will make the problems of the student youth disappear, as these are of a general nature, meaning that they are also to be found outside the Greek borders.” Markezinis thus placed the issue of student unrest in Greece within the wider context of international student agitation, implying that a single government could not possibly deal with student rebelliousness, no matter what measures it might take. Markezinis concluded the interview by hinting ironically that student revolt could be legitimate only when there was political repression, thus placing Greece’s condition at that point in time in a different register. In other words, he stated overly optimistically that Greece no longer had a democratic deficit, thus making any student rebellion unjustified: “Only where democracy does not function should the universities protest on political grounds.”⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the students were diffident about the whole liberalization experiment, drawing on two other models of inspiration: the political unrest in Thailand and the shock generated by Pinochet’s coup in Chile in September 1973. The latter led to a demonstration in late September in Athens. Ri-

gas Feraios even passed a resolution on the Chilean case, linking it directly to the Greek case as part of the same US plot. While Chile's authoritarian twist reinforced Western left-wingers' lack of trust in the capacity of a democratic state to make socialist reforms without suffering a coup d'état, in Greece it was proof that American interests were ruthlessly pursued in the same manner all over the world, always at the expense of people's democratic rights. A Rigas leaflet read:

For the Greek students, who have lived for six years now under the dictatorship of Papadopoulos, the scenario is well-known. Just like Papadopoulos in Greece, Pinochet in Chile talks about "a patient in a plaster cast," they have the same obscurantist ideology, they use the same rough-and-ready demagogy, the same lies. And it is not strange. Because the assassins of the Chilean people and the Greek Junta have been trained in the same centers of international subversion in the United States, the plans of the people behind the coups have been elaborated in the same offices of the American KYP. The two Juntas serve the same interests: they defend the privileges of native oligarchy and the strategic and economic positions of the popular movement that threatens directly or in the long term these privileges and positions. The Greek students are aware of all this, and this is why they shouted in the demonstration of 25 September in the center of Athens "Allende, Allende."⁶⁰

Allende's name became a slogan and was later used during the Polytechnic, demonstrating the transnational attitude of protest among Greek students and their conviction that their struggle was part of a wider anti-imperialist front that was taking place worldwide. More importantly, drawing a parallel between the Greek and Chilean cases placed Greece firmly within a third-worldist paradigm. Similarly, in a speech in West Germany in early 1974, PAK's leader Andreas Papandreou summarized these ideas: "The bloody overthrow of Allende in Chile by the junta of Pinochet and the establishment of a military dictatorship in Greece express, just like Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Congo—and so many other cases—the violent course of modern capitalism. Therefore, for our struggle to be victorious it has to be conducted on a worldwide scale."⁶¹ Another slogan that established the imaginary line of connection between the various oppressed countries went "Chile, Greece, and Spain, let's march on toward democracy," this time bringing the ailing General Franco's Spain to the picture.⁶²

Thailand's unrest became a similar symbol. In October 1973, 200,000 protesters, mainly students, attacked and occupied a government building

against the military Junta of Thanom Kittikachorn, a repressive regime dating from 1971 and thought to be corrupt and backed by the United States. After ten days of violent clashes and assaults between the Thai police and the crowd of protesters, a series of teargas explosions instigated riots, during which 66 students were shot dead and 876 participants injured. Kittikachorn had ordered the army to “do its duty” against student “terrorists” who were “destroying life and property.”⁶³ This event was about to have striking similarities to Greece’s Polytechnic bloodbath—more than the Polytechnic had had to the Parisian May ’68. In contrast to the Polytechnic, however, the massacre of Thai students actually succeeded in bringing about the overthrow of the dictatorial government. The main slogan of Greek students, “Tonight there will be Thailand,” was realized only in terms of violence.

The tendency to refer to and identify with international incidents betrays the students’ perception of themselves as being part of a wider global struggle with international symbols, points of reference, and a common enemy: US imperialism. A positive identification emerged among Greek students with the repressed “other,” also reflecting an orientalist certitude of possessing a privileged gaze that could distinguish between the positive and the negative elements in foreign experience. This was a trait that the Greek students had in common with many of their counterparts around the world. All in all, two different cultural images emerged, in which the Western Bloc’s uprisings acted as a source of inspiration, while Third-World movements were a revolutionary guide.⁶⁴ What emerges clearly from all this is the link between the local and the international, in other words the “glocal” aspect of the Greek student movement: thinking “globally” and acting “locally”—long before that term became fashionable.

The Junta proceeded with its experiment and a carrot and stick attitude towards the student movement. By 18 October, all expelled students were permitted to return to the university thanks to decree 168/73 on amnesty. On the same day, however, the president of the Cretan local society in Salonica was arrested following a meeting of the society. Some days later, Chrysis Iordanoglou, president of the Thrace Macedonian local society, launched a lawsuit against police pressure that had prevented the society from holding elections in accordance with law 937/1973, but the public prosecutor refused to discuss the case, saying it was beyond his responsibility.⁶⁵ Soon afterward, the Athenian local societies of Cretans, Patrans, Chioters, Ilians, and Epirotes called all students to mass registration and participation in student elections, due to the fact that the elected administrative councils wanted to hold elections with the existing small number of registered members. In their announcement, the societies repeated the classic demand of 15 percent of the budget for education, and they also called that the government rescind the

decrees abolishing the deferral of military service and the holding of general assemblies until 1 November in order to elect committees that would hold elections in January 1974. Lastly, Law School students criticized the pro-regime–appointed student union Themis, which insisted on distinguishing between “strictly student matters” and political ones, ignoring conscription. By that time, 150 students had been conscripted.

At the same time, the prospect of elections was creating a new potential. The Markezinis experiment signaled an opening, a way out of stagnation that created new and greater expectations not about the Junta’s intentions but about how civil society might exploit this opportunity. The undersecretary of public order, Spyridon Zournatzis, proposed a politics of oblivion premised on “forgetting and forgiving the past,” even announcing the rehabilitation of Theodorakis’s pre-Junta songs.⁶⁶ His appeal was not heard, however. In 1968, George Papandreou’s funeral had provided one of the few big demonstrations in the first years of the dictatorship. On 4 November 1973, on the fifth anniversary of his death, his short memorial service provided terrain for the expression of more public protest.

Giannis Kourmoulakis remembers the violence that took place during the memorial between the two conflicting parties, demonstrators and policemen, with victims on both sides: “Papandreou’s memorial took place. Something unprecedented happened there. Five hundred thousand people were gathered, and there was mayhem. Beatings, all hell broke loose! I was involved in the beatings too. There with the police. I hit some policemen too, over there, and then they searched for me all over Athens in order to find me and put me away. I really had a close shave there” (Kourmoulakis, interview). Seventeen people were brought to trial on the ground that they were “a few extremists committing anarchist acts and outrageous activities against the small police force maintaining order.”⁶⁷ The trials caused renewed unrest around the University of Athens, where students shouted anti-Junta slogans and came into conflict with the police. In the meantime, Markezinis kept postponing his liberalization measures, creating even more tension. Prominent politicians, including Panagiotis Kanellopoulos and Georgios Mavros, defended the seventeen. A film used by the defense during the trial that recorded the most savage beating of students seen in public to date was later widely disseminated by the press, drastically undermining the image of a smooth transition to democracy. At the same time, the foreign press covering the incident reached a correct conclusion: “Greece is stretching out.”⁶⁸

By mid-November, the situation was turning explosive. Public tension escalated due to the 1973 oil crisis that was hitting the country. On 20 October, the government had announced new economic measures, one of which freed prices, which meant an automatic increase in the cost of bread

and agricultural products. A politics of austerity was announced in order to keep inflation in check and prevent shortages. As the consumer index rose and inflation boomed during the period of the crisis, finances became tight; this is what the Polytechnic occupation slogan “Bread” would some weeks later refer to, underlining the students’ conviction that they were talking on behalf of an entire nation in crisis.⁶⁹

The Mission of the Youth

As a result of their frequent mobilizations over the previous two years, the students sensed that as an intellectual minority they had the mandate of the Greek people to act in their interest as a legitimate *avant-garde* aiming at a sociopolitical transformation. Alkis Rigos, a Panteios student and one of the movement’s so-called grandfathers due to his relatively old age, describes this understanding: “We had the widespread sensation that all of society went in circles around us. There was a particular sort of authorization by society to us, that ‘It is you.’ Of course one could go off one’s rocker through this, it had negative aspects too” (Rigos, interview). The sense students had of themselves as a nonconformist *avant-garde* in Greek society dated back to the Lambrakides but had strengthened by 1972 and above all after the Polytechnic events of early 1973.

The students’ faith in their role stemmed in part from their positive representation in periodicals and other publications. Students were often characterized as millenarian carriers of change, reflecting the post-1968 mood. The publisher Nikolaos Psaroudakis said in 1972: “The revolutionary quality of this youth has a purity. Such a youth is the foundation of a free people. If a people goes ahead, this is owed to the youth’s revolutionary spirit. Tomorrow’s people will spring out of the youth with opinion and character. The rebellious youth is the foundation of the future.”⁷⁰ The great dailies created parallels between the problems of youth, the students’ world, and what was happening in other countries. The subject of youth as a whole was a heated topic of debate in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with such constant analyses of the role, function, and potential of youth, that it is often argued that youth itself became by and large a nonexistent category, “a pure construction of the media, a surface phenomenon only.”⁷¹

Apart from being a valuable source for circulating information on international developments, newspapers also provided a means of bringing students closer to the spirit of protest movements abroad. Everyday reports in Greek newspapers analyzed the unrest in Spanish universities (with headlines such as “When the students dare, the dictatorship is shaken”) as well as the

situation in Portuguese universities and society when the parallel opening of Marcelo Caetano was taking place, referred to as “pseudo-elections.” All this generated an obvious “transfer” and identification on the part of the readers.

The return of the students who had been violently conscripted had a major impact on the student movement. Considered a victory, their return encouraged and rallied the students, contributing to the growth of the mass movement. The return to the universities of the conscripted students, albeit shaved and with their long hair buzzed off, reinforced the self-confidence of the rest.⁷² One returned conscript, Stelios Logothetis, recalled in an interview that, having been recently dismissed, “[we] still wore our military jackets.”⁷³ The semiology of the military outfit and its homeopathic use was further enhanced by the Junta’s own symbols, as at this time real Hellenic Army jackets came to replace the American ones, expressing a stark contrast to their wearers’ actual political identity. Mimis Androulakis, a student leader at the time, recalls in his writings that the unification between the legendary students in uniform with their colleagues had explosive results:

And you can imagine, a whole train full of left-wing soldiers, what a celebration, singing songs from the moment we left, and then we all met and this whole crowd entered the Polytechnic. In fact, I didn’t change clothes, I went in with my military uniform. During all the days of the Polytechnic I was in military uniform, apart from a gabardine that someone brought me. . . . I insist on the chemistry that existed when the conscripted ones came and met the other movement which was in turmoil. This made the movement sprout up, it was a big mistake by the Junta to let us go.⁷⁴

Androulakis describes the soldier-students’ return to Athens in trains as “epic,” and this adjective is often used in life histories regarding the trains that seem to be connected on an imaginary level with the Marxist icon of the “locomotive of history” and to Lenin’s arrival in Saint Petersburg in 1917. Moreover, following the impact of May ’68, which had posed the problem of defining the subjects of history, the role of the individual in historical procedures appeared to have shifted, and for the first time Greek students considered themselves vehicles of historicity and factors of social change.⁷⁵ Dafermos writes, “The people who participated in the movement . . . were experiencing each moment with the feeling of History.”⁷⁶ Others, such as the secretary of the Coordinating Committee at the Polytechnic occupation, argued that the function of a movement is to “eavesdrop on the people’s historical consciousness.”⁷⁷

Students' image of themselves taking part in the process of history contributed to their conviction that they had been informally authorized by Greek society to lead the opposition on its behalf. As Stelios Kouloglou put it, "The students carried on their shoulders the weight of the whole of Greek society,"⁷⁸ acting as a counterweight to six years of apathy. Thus, it is no surprise that when the amnesty of the summer of 1973 had taken place, many attributed it to the effects of the students' mobilizations. While on their way out of prison, some political prisoners spoke of a "people's victory," most of them clearly referring to the students as the agents of the people. Nikos Konstandopoulos and Stelios Nestor, two prominent members of the clandestine resistance organization Democratic Defense in Athens and Salonica, thanked "our youth who struggled to bring us out of prison,"⁷⁹ adding that this was "their victory."⁸⁰ A third member of the organization, Dionysis Karagiorgas, an economics professor who lost four fingers in an explosion while trying to construct a bomb, concluded: "We owe everything to the youth and their struggles."⁸¹

This recognition of the student movement's ability to do what the underground political parties and resistance organizations failed to achieve is remarkable. However, it also increased the responsibility and sense of "national mission" that the students felt—a sense that they acted on behalf of the entire society rather than a focus on their own problems alone. The notion that the "mission" of youth was the vanguard of the antidictatorship movement differed greatly, however, from more traditional Marxist-Leninist notions of the party as the vanguard, since instead of wanting to be a tightly disciplined group of dedicated revolutionaries, the students sought to be part of a mass movement that involved the entire Greek society. This feeling was dramatically enhanced in November 1973, in the three days that marked the peak of the conflict between the student movement and the regime.

"This Is What Revolution Must Be Like": The Polytechnic Events

When writing of the Polytechnic occupation, it can be difficult to distinguish eyewitness testimony from hearsay.⁸² This event has been memorialized and analyzed so thoroughly over the past forty years that the biographical memory in individual life stories often relies heavily on ex-post narratives. As a result, interviewees tend to exhibit a shifted perspective, "seeing" themselves through the eyes of an observer rather than as protagonists,⁸³ thereby reproducing the public discourse and its hermeneutical schemata. As a great shock creates the need to effectively identify its circumstances, causes, and

consequences, namely, to find “adequate causation,”⁸⁴ people tend to formulate “objectified” conclusions based on their understanding of the nature of these three days and their significance instead of analyzing their own individual experiences.⁸⁵ Even conflated narratives and anecdotal recollections nonetheless constitute powerful transmitters of emotions, imagery, or silences, all of interpretative value.

By early November 1973, almost all corporate student issues had been satisfied by the Markezinis administration, including the restoration of the deferral of military service and the return of the conscripts. The thorny question of student elections remained, however. The latter were postponed to February 1974 instead of being scheduled prior to Christmas, as the students insisted. As this issue was not solved at the meeting between student representatives and Minister of Education Panagiotis Sifnaios on 13 November, a new impasse arose. A report by the newspaper *Thessaloniki* the following day openly attributed distinct student demands to the various political groupings. At first the spontaneous occupation of the Polytechnic that occurred on the same day, 14 November, superseded the divisions between different student lines, but in the end it exacerbated them.

14 November: Contingency

Though a climate of general discontent was solidifying, collective protest did not emerge automatically. The occupation started only three days prior to a scheduled and eagerly awaited press conference by Prime Minister Markezinis in which he was to delineate his government’s strategy, announce the election day, and probably elaborate further on the “student issue.” On Wednesday, 14 November, a false alarm impelled students who were already gathered at the Law School to rush to the Polytechnic in solidarity with their colleagues, who were supposedly being bullied by the police. More than three hundred enraged students created a clamorous demonstration stretching the length of the central Solonos Street. Although the students discovered upon their arrival that no beatings were taking place, the crowd that had gathered—almost two thousand strong—decided to enter the building despite police attempts to prevent them. Damofli describes the scene and stresses that there was a general feeling that something was about to happen:

We had a meeting at the Law School, and some EKKE people came and said, “In the Polytechnic there is hell breaking loose.” We stopped the assembly and went on foot to the Polytechnic, where no hell was breaking loose. But some people were shouting at the gate bars, and they were throwing some sour oranges, and some other people inside who were holding assemblies were saying “Hey guys,

stop it, we're having an assembly." In any case, people started coming, because anyway, I'm telling you, the wish, the climate for such assemblies to take place existed. (Damofli, interview)

The fact that the Polytechnic occupation took off because of a misunderstanding exposes the importance of contingency not just in the case of Greek students in 1973, but in historical processes in general.

The ensemble of students who accidentally found themselves in the Polytechnic decided to boycott classes and occupy the building in an entirely spontaneous takeover.⁸⁶ As Sidney Tarrow points out, "A few people who break away from the forms of collective action in unusual circumstances produce intensive mass movements at the peak of the protest waves."⁸⁷ Having already tested the tool of occupation, a highly symbolic performance, students felt they could control the situation. Social psychologist Anna Mantoglou quotes one individual who remembers the feeling of enthusiasm that characterized the decision to occupy the Polytechnic: "Then we went and locked the Stournara Street [gate]. This is where enthusiasm possessed us: OCCUPATION. When we were saying this, we really thought we had the POWER at this moment."⁸⁸

The occupation largely bypassed the two main left-wing student organizations, and therefore there was no effective control of the direction that it took or of the students' demands for the first day and a half. The occupation was not within the scope of the leadership of the pro-Moscow communists, which considered it "an irresponsible and hasty move of an intense leftist character."⁸⁹ In fact, A-EFEE distanced itself from the venture from the very beginning, as it disliked unorganized action, which could get out of hand. Angeliki Xydi, who followed this line, recalled her past skepticism: "I wasn't sure, you know, about what we were going to do. I had far too many doubts, even a disagreement. Because I thought that it was too risky. From one point of view, yes, it was maturing; from another it was not organized. Not the least organized" (Xydi, interview).

Rigas more or less shared this attitude, although without expressing a clear-cut position, as it was not ready for such an eventuality. *Katerina, still in Rigas at this time, emphasizes that she was taken aback by the fact that an occupation could take place without a specific demand:

The idea that one could organize an occupation, which is one of the advanced forms [of protest], and in fact without a specific student demand, a unionist one—this thought was shocking in the beginning. ... So, beyond the surprise and the shock that this could happen even without a central student demand, and from the moment that we realized that this was possible, ... there was no issue,

everyone entered and stood on the first line, the dilemma didn't last long. (*Katerina, interview)

*Katerina's pragmatic attitude was widespread among the Greek students. Michalis Sabatakakis underlines this issue very clearly: "There we have a contradictory fact, which is that the protagonists of an insurrection do not believe in its insurrectionary character straight away" (Sabatakakis, interview). In fact, the smaller groups of leftists and even outsiders and marginal elements of the student movement, such as anarchists, led the way at first by writing antigovernment slogans on the walls and circulating leaflets containing anti-Junta messages. The Polytechnic gestalt was characterized by a constant tension between leftist and anarchist spontaneity and communist pragmatism.

In due time, the two main organizations tried to keep the situation under control by creating the first Coordinating Committee of Occupation (CCO), which exercised light control over the occupation until 15 November.⁹⁰ It was the leftists who supported the occupation throughout, however, as it was a form of direct provocation, and they took the lead during the early stages of the endeavor. Their declared line supported an anti-imperialist social upheaval, with slogans such as "People's rule," "People make the revolution," and "Workers-farmers government."⁹¹ The then-orthodox communists refer in present-day life stories to the "stubbornness and frenzy" of the leftists.⁹² The latter saw their desire for a direct confrontation with the regime becoming a growing possibility and antagonized the anarchists with their revolutionary zeal. The lurking or manifest differences within the entire microcosm of student resistance were rapidly coming to a head.

At first, the reaction of the regime to the occupation remained surprisingly measured. According to the memoirs of Prime Minister Markezinis, at a meeting on 14 November between himself, Papadopoulos, Minister of Education Panagiotis Sifnaios and Minister of Public Order Panagiotis Therapos, they made the decision not to interfere.⁹³ Naturally, the General Secretariat of Press and Information denounced student mobilizations as a result of anarchy. It particularly castigated political slogans, such as "Power to the people," "Down with the army," and "NATO out": "Groups of people [are] gathered in the premises and in front of the National Metsoveion Polytechnic, mainly composed of students streaming in from various Faculties, providing an admittedly improper spectacle, as they make noise and obstruct the movement of people and vehicles. None of the slogans that can be discerned from within this noise expresses a student demand, but they all without exception are of a political nature."⁹⁴ The declaration of the Junta stressed that the police also would restrain themselves from any involvement apart from making sure that no "peace-loving civilian" was harmed. It attributed

the responsibility for the occupation not to student elements but to “other” circles, alluding to the leaders of the old political parties and the exiled KKE: “The government is firm in insisting on these lines, as it is certain that the entire student world denounces the deeds that are attempted by irresponsible elements and that it does not wish anything other than the smooth continuation of its studies. It knows with certainty that the Greek people and public opinion see the aims pursued by the irresponsible individuals mentioned before and will attribute the responsibilities to those to whom they actually belong.”⁹⁵ The policemen who gathered outside the building never tried to break in, especially after the dean of the Polytechnic denied the police chief the right to storm the building to “restore order.” The students interpreted the absence of police intervention as a weakness, and they acted to stimulate a particular framing of the existing conditions that enhanced mobilizational efforts.⁹⁶ The dictatorship was indeed experiencing a structural inner crisis, although it was not yet entirely visible.

15 November: Celebration

As the occupation went on for a second day, Thursday, 15 November, even more protesters entered the Polytechnic. The central streets around the Polytechnic were jammed with traffic, which the students exploited in order to distribute leaflets and write slogans on trolleys and buses, calling everyone to come and demonstrate against the dictators. At one point, an estimated ten thousand people were gathered around the Polytechnic, cheering and taking part in the celebratory atmosphere—a practice that enabled the collective expression of feelings. Most life stories describe this second day as a “celebration,” blessed by a feeling of solidarity, companionship and participation. The individual was entirely absorbed by the collective, creating a huge “collective subject” that constitutes one of the favorite loci of this generation’s memory.

The Polytechnic also tested the organizational efficiency of students. First and foremost, a short-wave radio transmitter was created ad hoc and broadcast with ever greater frequency as the occupation continued. While at first no control was exercised over the station, dubbed “The Radio Station of the Free and Fighting Students, the Free and Fighting Greeks,” after the creation of the CCO it too came under central direction. The main message broadcast was that the students had barricaded themselves inside the Polytechnic building and were calling for the people to revolt. The station maintained that the student action was a blow against tyranny, and it issued statements concerning popular freedom, national sovereignty, exit from NATO, and above all opposition to foreign monopolies, “imperialist coalitions,” and their domestic props.⁹⁷ Through its main announcer, A-EFEE member Maria Damanaki—a former student militant and present-day



Figure 5.4. 15 November 1973. An estimated ten thousand people gathered around the Polytechnic. This second day of occupation is typically described as a “celebration.” (Courtesy Iason Chandrinos)

European Commissioner—set the main tone of the student mobilization and popularized, among other things, what was about to become the most famous slogan of the occupation: “Bread–Education–Freedom.” And this alongside Mikis Theodorakis’s songs that were played throughout the days of the occupation and heard on the megaphones that were positioned on the pillars of the Polytechnic gate. Radio proved to be the most significant means of propaganda in the hands of students and also their major means of disseminating information. To paraphrase Passerini, the students fully exercised the medium’s power of turning individualism into collectivism and of involving people intimately.⁹⁸

Dimitris Papachristos, one of the four main radio station announcers, argued that through the radio broadcasts “the poetic exaltation of an entire people found its expression,” while “discourse rediscovered its meaning.”⁹⁹ Another announcer, Tonia Moropoulou, remembers the initial embarrassment of the “cold announcement of dreams,” including the students’ proposals for modernization and for tackling the economic problems after the establishment of social democracy—all of which were propagated by radio.

When, on Thursday evening, more people took to the streets, the discourse became more “talkative.” A third announcer, Lambros Papadimitrakis, recalls that as time went by, expression became “more political, freer, more human.”¹⁰⁰ The Polytechnic radio station signified a “capture of speech,” to use Michel de Certeau’s celebrated term regarding the May ’68 movement. Its potential in terms of communicative production was liberating, in so far as it freed the hitherto “imprisoned speech.”¹⁰¹

Apart from the radio transmitter, the students created patrols, a first aid department, and a canteen, and they coordinated the writing and distribution of leaflets. Contrary to what was taking place outside, things were heating up inside the building regarding the control of the occupational components, such as the committees for the duplicator, the radio station, and the loudspeakers. In order to deal with this problem, assemblies were organized Thursday night supporting the creation of a robust coordinating structure.¹⁰² The clashes within the thirty-one-member Coordinating Committee highlighted the vast conceptual differences between the various organizations. The system of allowing two representatives from each faculty with the right to one vote made apparent the overwhelming presence of A-EFEE and Rigas and of nonaffiliated students, as well as the underrepresentation of leftists. These latter were strong in influence but not coordinated enough to make their way into the students’ organizational structure, and their flamboyant rhetoric was often castigated as unrealistic and somewhat grotesque.

The struggle for a majority vote tested the power and conviction of each organization. Ariadni Alavanou, an orthodox communist at the time and member of the CCO, recalls with bitterness the great hostility the leftists demonstrated against her organization: “They were very hostile toward us. That is, while there was a big event going on, you know, in which ... hostilities and differences between the parties should soften in a way in order to promote the event, these ones were very much against A-EFEE” (Alavanou, interview). The conflict was intensified by the fact that the advent of the CCO signaled the first direct intervention exercised by “revisionists.” The committee eradicated the far-flung anarchical and leftist rhetoric as dangerous, and from that point forward all slogans had to be permitted by the CCO, while anarchists themselves ran the serious risk of being thrown out of the building.

Angeliki Xydi confessed with some reluctance that these practices were undemocratic in character: “Probably we were doing certain things in a rather unorthodox way, namely, we imposed them in some way. Especially after Thursday, the control of emotions, what was being said from the radio station, what was coming out. Maybe from our side, which was the strongest one proportionally, some things were made by imposition, by force” (Xydi,

interview). Anna Mantoglou quotes a participant who argues for the correctness of this decision:

“Bread–Education–Freedom” was the right slogan. . . . Certainly, we should have antidictatorship, anti-imperialistic slogans then, and we tried to promote these ones. But I remember that slogans were written like “Sexual Freedom,” “Down with the State.” . . . We snuffed out these slogans and we put in a patrol group. We managed to promote anti-imperialistic, antimonopoly and antidictatorship slogans. . . . One could say that the first Coordinating Committee . . . put some order on the duplicators.¹⁰³

The anarchists’ role has long been contested by all sides, being alternately over- and underplayed. It is almost certain that their role during the 1973 Polytechnic occupation was marginal but highly controversial. The anarchists were accused of having a libidinal conception of politics that was harmful to the movement. Famously, one of their leading female figures, “Aretoula,” is said to have written on the walls of the Polytechnic, “Long live the orgies!”¹⁰⁴ This bombastic demand for unlimited sexual pleasure was rejected as sheer provocation by all student groups and was effectively appropriated by the regime in order to smear the student occupation as a pansexual fiesta.¹⁰⁵ In such instances, the anarchists were immediately pigeonholed as *agents provocateurs*. A member of Rigas and the Coordinating Committee recalls this conflict: “The extreme and high-sounding slogans of the anarchists, such as ‘down with the state,’ ‘sexual revolution,’ etc. were extinguished, and they in turn howled at us as ‘antiquated.’”¹⁰⁶ In contrast, Nikitas Lionarakis, another Rigas member, reacted to my assertion that the followers of the two communist parties were in search of provocateurs by arguing that only KNE, Rigas’s rival organization, did so: “This is what KNE tried to do. We were more reasonable. We were aware of the fact that not everyone was a *provocateur*” (Lionarakis, interview).

The anarchists were quick to use antiestablishment slogans such as “Down with the authorities,” “Social revolution,” “State-repression,” “Down with capital,” “Down with the army,” “General insurrection,” “Down with salary jobs,” and “Patriots are morons.” They also spread pro-worker slogans, such as “Workers’ councils” and “Workers have no motherland.”¹⁰⁷ The hyperrevolutionary character of their slogans irritated communist students. The latter’s attitude was partly dictated by the pragmatic estimate that the Polytechnic occupation was a serious situation that could hardly be linked to the libertarianism of May ’68 in France. Those students who behaved too radically offered the Junta the advantage of accusing the students of be-

ing “anarchists”. The anarchist students’ slogans were daring and too “far out” for the caliber and aims of the student movement. The communists’ idea was that revolutionism and counterculture had to be undercover and well hidden at a time when some student organizations were still advancing nonpolitical demands. A great sensation was created when a vast anarchist placard reading “Down with the State” appeared on the central gate of the Polytechnic, an act later used by the regime propaganda that dubbed the movement nihilistic.¹⁰⁸

As the anarchists’ slogans were in reality closer to those of the radical Left than to the anarchist tradition, leftist groups felt less hostile than the rest to this sort of radicalism. OSE leader Stavros Lygeros explains that the activists close to the KKE treated these anarchists in a violent way. He argues that the anarchists relied on him to defend them, implying a certain complicity: “I was protecting them. They were being beaten up, KKE people got them and beat them up within the Polytechnic, and they asked me for protection” (Lygeros, interview). Stergios Katsaros, a self-designated “professional revolutionary” of the previous generation who was released from prison just before the events, presents a different picture: “The slogans of the anarchists, such as ‘down with the state,’ were not adopted by anyone. They sounded somewhat weird, as the anarchist movement had no tradition in Greece. However, no one moved against them, even if some Stalinists tried to. Their attempts were absorbed within the wider tolerance of people.”¹⁰⁹ However, this much more benign version of the events totally neglects the constant typecasting of anarchists as the *agents provocateurs* par excellence and their systematic harassment by the rest.

In many ways, the anarchists’ voice—and especially their insistence on *jouissance*—expressed the provocative side of ’68 against the more serious Greek student movement. The Greek movement’s earnestness resembled the student uprisings in Third World and Eastern Bloc countries, all cases where protesters struggled for basic human and political rights, which were already firmly established in Western Europe. Seriousness in all these cases was largely dictated by the overtly repressive context, the high cost of participation, and the sense of “national mission” that students felt. This is why the CCO very quickly decided that slogans had to be direct, succinct, memorable, and ready to be copied and recounted, but deprived of any antihierarchical connotations.¹¹⁰

This does not mean that student slogans could not be burlesque: the cases of “We haven’t got enough to eat, today it’s them we’ll gobble up,” “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,” and “People do not want you, take the ape and go away” (this last referring to Markezinis’s physical ugliness), were remarkable for their spontaneity and their almost surreal

tone. “May ’68,” “Revolution now, now, now,” “Women unite,” and “The people are starving, Capital is chewing” were some more out-of-the-ordinary sound bites. The slogans often stressed economic deprivation, as the financial crisis and the currency devaluation had created an entirely different atmosphere than that of the relatively prosperous years of the late 1960s.¹¹¹ Maria Tzortzopoulou and Michalis Syrianos stress that the slogans calling for solidarity had a weird climax, starting from “People, you’re starving, why do you bow to them?” and ending with the more radical “People, you’re starving, why don’t you hang ’em?” (Tzortzopoulou and Syrianos, interview). Some of the most heard slogans were anti-American (“USA out,” “Throw the Sixth Fleet out”) and anti-Atlanticist (“NATO out,” “NATO-CIA, traitors”), expressing the students’ certainty that the Americans were the major mainstays of the Junta and were therefore the Colonels’ accomplices, if not their bosses. Other slogans referring indignantly to Papadopoulos’s wife as a “laundress” received negative comments, as for example from *Le Monde’s* correspondent.¹¹²

In terms of different student strategies, A-EFEE soon stopped insisting on the evacuation of the building and the projection of student demands, while Rigas proposed the creation of a “government of national unity.” This proposal highlighted a major problem concerning the objectives of the oc-



Figure 5.5. Students writing anti-Junta slogans on a bus in front of the occupied Polytechnic, 14–16 November 1973. The central streets around the Polytechnic were jammed with traffic, which the students exploited in order to distribute leaflets and write slogans on trolleys and buses, calling everyone to come and demonstrate against the dictators. (Photographer: Aristotelis Sarrikostas)

occupation: Was its real aim to bring down the Junta and return to the pre-1967 political situation, or was it to introduce something more radical? To what extent was this movement aspiring to pass from protest to revolution? Whatever the answer to that question might have been, the “workerism” of the students, endowed and indoctrinated with a solid Marxist background through which they framed events, was evident. It is no coincidence that alongside the Coordinating Committee, the students also formed a Workers’ Committee composed mainly of construction workers with strong left-wing credentials, even though workers’ trade unionism had barely existed up to that point. These construction workers, alongside the farmers from the region of Megara who happened to protest during the same days against the exploitation of their soil by a powerful industrialist, were the only ones who went out on strike. In its manifesto, the Workers’ Committee asked for a general strike that never occurred. Its tone was more directly political than that of the students: it called for mixed student-worker assemblies, rejected the cost-of-living index, and praised the “working People.”¹¹³

Giannis Felekis, a worker at the time and a member of the clandestine Trotskyist group Spartacus, remembers that the people repeated these slogans mimetically: “The people snapped up the slogans straight away, no matter what bullshit we were saying, no matter how far out these were. Just like the dry cane catches fire” (Felekis, interview). He further points out that in the assemblies the workers talked about a “Soviet Popular Democratic Workers-Farmers Government” and other unrealistic plans. Nikos Bistis shares this view from a somewhat different standpoint and adds with irony: “The ones who were turning political in those moments were willing to do everything you told them. Destroy the state and become Thailand” (Bistis, interview). There were many who recognized the possible danger of neglecting the rest of society as the students’ conviction of being the national avant-garde reached its apogee. Stelios Papas, the secretary of the Coordinating Committee, notes, “When everyone is singing the national anthem, swinging Greek flags, you cannot be waving the sickle and hammer.”¹¹⁴ This precise contradiction indicates the limits of the revolt, which aspired to be simultaneously national and radical.

Nonetheless, the occupation seemed a first-class opportunity to bring about a “people’s democracy.” Political economist Albert O. Hirschman comments that humans are incapable of imagining different scales of social transformation and tend to aspire to “total,” rather than modest changes in times of crisis;¹¹⁵ this entirely fits the Polytechnic situation, where the tendency was reinforced by Marxist messianism. At this juncture when anything seemed possible, the perception of time itself was altered. As the waiting had come to an end, an immediate future seemed imminently close. The

experience of collective liberation that brings along “the expansion of Eros,” in Francesco Alberoni’s words, is a source of unanimous group exaltation; the individual surpasses the self, feels that s/he is becoming a serious actor in history and forms the conviction that “everything is possible.”¹¹⁶ Leftist leader Dionysis Mavrogenis recalled in a latter day interview his sense that “this is what revolution must be like.”¹¹⁷ As in social movements, subjective perceptions matter as much as the objective situation on the ground—being in many ways “nested,” and Mavrogenis’s viewpoint offers us a valuable window to what was going on inside some of the actors’ heads.

Recollections of the Polytechnic also often stress the density of experiences relative to time. Former student leader Giorgos Vernikos writes: “Under the increased danger and the tense situations you came to know the inner self of people in a very short time, something which in normal conditions takes years to discover. Fear, cowardice, bravery, sorrow for the wretchedness and other human capacities coexisted side by side, and were easily coming to the surface.”¹¹⁸ Historian Eleni Varikas’s analysis of the ancient Greek division of time renders itself particularly useful here. Accordingly, whereas *chronos* stands for a temporal sequence referring to a continuous flow of time that “can be measured by the clock,” *kairos* “points to a historical time in which each moment contains a unique chance for action, ... an opportunity that might not recur.”¹¹⁹ The Greek student movement—just like its counterparts abroad in the ’68 era—was poised by “the time of the now” attitude, a conviction that the moment could not be postponed and a faith in its ability to stop the methodical ticking of the world clock, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin’s remark on the French Revolution.¹²⁰ The slogan “People, it’s now or never” that was voiced when the collective coming-together at the Polytechnic was reaching its height, encapsulated the students’ conviction that this was their only opportunity to inflict a fatal blow on the regime,¹²¹ but was also a clear manifestation of their “hic et nunc” attitude.

The CCO’s imposition of some order within the building was in stark contrast to what was taking place outside, where spontaneous demonstrations and enthusiasm ruled.¹²² The occupation of the Polytechnic, located in the center of Athens, underlines the importance of performing acts of resistance on public stages, in addition to university campus yards.¹²³ The Polytechnic occupation possessed a favorable political opportunity structure, including sympathetic third parties and allies, and made use of a new set of tactics, all of which made it considerably more likely to succeed than earlier student actions. There is no doubt that it was an unprecedented event and an outlet for popular dissatisfaction, though the exact number of people who actually took to the streets remains unknown. Pictures and reels document a vast presence outside the closed gates of the building. People brought medicine,

food, and cigarettes; many remained outside the gates and staged marches. Stergios Katsaros's reminiscences provide a biased but expressive analysis of the reasoning and typology of people who turned suddenly combative:

The one who had been tortured and humiliated in the den of the Police ... was raising the fist to his torturers shouting "Tonight Fascism Will Perish." The "good Mr Vasilis" who sat down prudently for six years, with a little car or some prison-flat as a reward, tried to smother the guilty feelings for his subordination by showing the greatest intransigence in the clashes with the police. The one who was passing by just in order to satisfy his curiosity, was overtaken by the grandiose spectacle of the liberation of the masses and participated in the demonstrations. The worker, who for years felt inside his skin the alienation, the suppression and the barbarous exploitation was awaking from a lethargy and united his voice with the extremist provocateur: "Down with Capital."¹²⁴

Despite the courageous and enthusiastic following that the occupation inspired, however, the popular response was not colossal. Contemporary reports refer to one hundred thousand people on site Friday morning, dwindling to fifty thousand by 7:00 Friday evening.¹²⁵ The daily *To Vima* and Athens Polytechnic's Rector Konofagos reported twenty thousand.¹²⁶ Ioanna Karystiani describes the failure of the occupation to mobilize the entire city, about 2.5 million people at the time, drawing an oppositional relation between students and people:

Certainly, when I was inside the Polytechnic then, the last day, I had already inside me the impression that the Athenian people did not make their way down in solidarity. And I thought, nor have the parents come down, the ones who had come down there were few, there was a radio station which could mobilize the people, but there was fear. The people didn't make their way down, they got scared. (Karystiani, interview)

Activist-turned-novelist Maro Douka expressed a similar thought in her novel *Fool's Gold*, quoting Frantz Fanon's conclusion that "all spectators are cowards and traitors"—a standard reference among radical third-worldists in the "long 1960s":

It occurred to me that if all the apartment blocks in the neighboring streets were to throw open their doors and windows, if all the

rooms and balconies were suddenly to be illuminated, then we could not be massacred this night. And I knew that whatever was to happen here tonight, would happen with the complicity of the apartment blocks—of the silent majority. And what Frantz Fanon says about cowards and traitors, could be applied with perfect truth here. I wondered what they could be doing in these flats. Surely not sleeping?¹²⁷

Doukas's description of ordinary people experiencing the Polytechnic events without directly engaging with them—as a sheer representation of the reality that was actually unfolding before their eyes—apart from Fanon powerfully evokes Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, yet another 1960s favorite. Towards the late hours of Friday the students' desperate cries "Everybody to the Streets," "Descend to the Streets," and especially the dramatic appeal "Tonight they are killing your children" underline the real or perceived chasm between students and society.

In any case, by extending their demands beyond university concerns, students made it clear for the first time that university issues could not be separated from society as a whole. Through their slogans and repeated appeals, they sought an interlocutor beyond the Junta and the university authorities, and they expanded their social base. This was a crucial transition for the movement from pure student protest to a wider social conflict. As historian Jeffrey Wasserstrom says is the case for most major student movements, the Greek movement was "triggered by incidents with broader political implications, and struggles that began as conflicts over internal matters," and in the end it escalated into a protest that "involved social issues and social groups far beyond the walls of individual campuses."¹²⁸ For that reason, the Polytechnic was the first and only moment of genuine osmosis between different generations within the movement.

Nikitas Lionarakis comments on the private side of this public event about some of the parents who were standing at the Polytechnic gates: "[They] were outside not out of support but out of concern for their kids" (Lionarakis, interview). Leftist leader Mavrogenis describes how the presence of his mother, who had suffered greatly during his detention at the EAT-ESA headquarters, reversed his mood concerning the revolt:

My mom had come in order to take me out of there. She had experienced the whole story with EAT and she had come to pick me up. ... She lay down there on the steps and remained until the evening, participating and listening to slogans. She was a young woman, together with other women over there. At a certain point, they brought

her up to the CC and I saw her. She told me, “I know that you’re not going to come.” She wanted to put pressure on me and take me out of there. “I know, but try to get out of there, so that they won’t bring you home dead,” and she left. This thing influenced me.”¹²⁹

The affection conveyed in this description of the interaction between Mavrogenis and his mother creates an interesting contrast to his self-identification as an intransigent revolutionary and redefines the student militants of the period as twenty-year-old adolescents in a traditional family-based society.

The theme of worried parents is a common one in narratives of the Polytechnic. Kleopatra Papageorgiou remembers her father: “We had met in fact after my arrest, the next day, the one after, and he told me, ‘Why do you get involved? Haven’t I told you to protect yourself so that you get your degree and then you can do whatever you like?’ And I told him, ‘But no, it’s now that it’s needed.’” As this event took place shortly before her father died, Papageorgiou represents her bereavement as a catalyst that reinforced her determination to fight against the Junta, as she held the regime directly responsible for his death: “I even told them once, I told them, ‘You put my father away. What else do you think you can do to me?’” (Papageorgiou, interview).

Xydi recalled with emotion her parents’ dignity when they came to visit her in ESA and her father’s understanding of her long-lasting absence from home:

And I remember afterward when I got out of ESA, after some one and a half months without any communication with them all this time, and they didn’t even know that I was coming home. When I went home, everything was so normal, that is, I knocked on the door, my father opened up, and I went in and he hugged me and said: “Come in, my child.” (Xydi, interview).

Sabatakakis recalls that his father drove him back to the Polytechnic shortly before the tanks arrived, knowing that the regime would eventually violently suppress the movement: “What remains in me is the fact that in that moment my father knew that I returned to a place which would be shortly invaded by means of arms, and therefore it’s a matter of life or death, and he didn’t tell me ‘Don’t go’” (Sabatakakis, interview). In contrast, Dafermos remembers that his mother was entirely uncomprehending and preached in favor of the benefits of a pro-regime stance: “My mother, well, she was crying, she was screaming. At times they caught me, they released me, I was running, hiding, leaving, well, she didn’t understand, she was saying, ‘The smart ones now are with the regime’” (Dafermos, interview).

Left-wing parents were often more anguished about their children's political endeavors than those with other political affiliations. In her semifictional representation of the student movement, Maro Douka confronts the tense relationship between the female protagonist and her father, who ultimately succumbs to his daughter's will. Her heroine recognizes a major parental legacy in her father's instruction of verses by national poet Dionysios Solomos, marking a recurrent evocation of the romantic revolutionary past:

I thought of my father—yesterday he'd come to look for me, I'd been much moved when he'd taken me unexpectedly in his arms, quoting in broken tones, *my eyes have beheld no land more glorious than this small battle ground*, and kissed my hair and the realization came to me once and for all that no matter how much or how wrongly I might judge this man, he was after all my father, and thank you, I said to him softly, for getting me to read Solomos and the *Free Besieged*.¹³⁰

Lionarakis's description of parents outside the Polytechnic hints not only at their concern for the physical safety of their children but at a general distress, especially concerning women students (Lionarakis, interview). What had happened briefly and on a smaller scale in the Law School occupation was repeated now on a wider scale: women eighteen and nineteen years old stayed out of the house all day long and spent the night with their colleagues. The intensification of experience extended from daytime to night life. Naturally, the intimate aspects of the Polytechnic were censored by participants at the time in order to avoid offering the Junta more arguments about the "anarchist and pansexual" character of the occupation, but also because, officially at least, sexual liberation was not one of the movement's priorities. This hidden aspect is more visible in later recollections that expose the inevitable change that militancy and day-and-night symbiosis had on people's private lives. Dimitris Papachristos, the flamboyant radio announcer during the last hours of the occupation, remembers: "The three to four thousand people who found themselves barricaded awakened and realized another reality in front of the danger. The danger and the fear of conflict and death were generating eroticism, an atmosphere of love and coexistence. This was expressed by eating all together, singing all together. Even relationships were forged in there. This eroticism was overflowing in everyone's face, in men and women."¹³¹

Stavros Lygeros talks about the "orgasm of the feast" of the Polytechnic, an "element which is often neglected by political analysis,"¹³² while Lionarakis equally argued that an enhanced sexual coming-together occurred during these days, aided by symbiosis and the intensity of the moment (Lionarakis, interview). Still, Kleopatra Papageorgiou clarifies that the "sexual

revolution” aspect was a myth—also expressing a feeling of regret for this. She takes a very critical stance toward reports of promiscuity during the Polytechnic occupation, even though her own experience was that of the Salonica occupation: “[Conservative politician] Rallis had said too that inside the Polytechnic orgies had taken place. How stupid was that. Where? I wish this had happened” (Papageorgiou, interview). Regardless of these conflicting views concerning the libidinal economy of the occupation, and even though the “orgies” theory is unfounded, conservative circles within the army were enraged by the supposed “pansexual” nature of the occupation. In his autobiographical novel, Tasos Darveris convincingly reconstructs the dialogues between apparently sexually repressed officers and soldiers: “Don’t you know what the students were doing all those days at the Polytechnic? I’ll tell you what they were doing. They were fucking. When the storm-troopers came in they found condoms in piles.”¹³³

Friday morning, 16 November, was marked by the embrace of the student venture by some illustrious political figures. This was, furthermore, the moment when A-EFEE decided to walk out of the building, as its “instruction” suggested that prolonging the occupation would only harm the aims of the movement. But A-EFEE’s students left only to come back some hours later upon realizing that the dynamics of the occupation could not be controlled. This is why the third day inside the Polytechnic was crucial: although the slogans and radio announcements were fully controlled by the CCO by this point, the students entirely surpassed the organizations’ lines.

The CCO continued to suffer greatly from the so-called line struggle, meaning the different strategies favored by the various student organizations. The declaration it issued on Friday manifested the difficulty of its members’ task of finding a common ground and a compromise in formulating their demands and positions. Dimitris Hatzisokratis, a member of the committee and politician at present, laments this “political self-limitation” due to the fragile climate at the assemblies.¹³⁴ Maro Douka offers a quite powerful literary representation of the whole situation: “The invisible hand of the Coordinating Committee was everywhere—come on now, cut out the Velouchiotis stuff, come on you bloody anarchist, leftist, provocateur, bomber, petty bourgeois extremist, and all the rest of the shit.”¹³⁵

The CCO’s statement of 16 November made it clear that the movement’s aim was the overthrow of the regime within the framework of a national struggle.¹³⁶ Apart from this vague formulation, the manifesto made no mention of what conditions would follow the fall of the “tyrannical Junta,” nor did it place itself within a wider political milieu that would include other political forces. It called on the people to support the ongoing revolt with all their means, mainly by going out on strike, and stressed the necessity of being detached from the so-called foreign factor, which the students held

responsible for a great many things, including the coup itself. The manifesto initially contained an appeal for the creation of a “government of national unity,” but this was rejected in the end due to the intransigence of the leftists, who threatened a walkout, considering any mention of “bourgeois” politicians to be totally out of tune with the subversive character of the revolt.¹³⁷ Accordingly, the manifesto, announced by the CCO at its first and only press conference in front of local and international journalists on Friday afternoon, was only approved after the removal of a call for solidarity between all antidictatorship forces and the old politicians. The call for “national independence and popular sovereignty” remained intact and was repeated on the radio station.¹³⁸

16–17 November: Transcendence and Massacre

Friday was also the turning point that transformed the occupation into a massacre. On this third consecutive day without police intervention, people started to believe—in one of the major paradoxes in recent Greek political history—that this would be the event that would bring down the regime. In fact, Papadopoulos had not ordered the violent dissolution of the occupation by this point because the costs of suppression seemed to exceed the costs of toleration.¹³⁹ As the occupation proceeded, participants had the growing sensation that they were changing things and were sensing history in the making, framing the latter as a collective process that takes on the sense of an advent.¹⁴⁰ Ioanna Karystiani presents this in almost religious terms, as an instant of pure transcendence:

In such elevated moments all people make crazy scenarios. . . . I think I saw it everywhere, everyone was determined, no matter how mad this seems to you, it was transcendence, from one point onward this takes you out of touch with reality. . . . In transcendence, how can I put it, one takes off. We had taken off, this did not touch us any longer. . . . Without knowing consciously that history was being written at this moment. (Karystiani, interview)

According to Dafermos, the widespread feeling was that the occupation was a unique opportunity that would never be repeated: “People were heated up, excited, saying, ‘To hell with it, I cannot stand it anymore. Here, there are so many of us, now we’re going to screw them’” (Dafermos, interview). Contrary to this view, Angeliki Xydi recalled having an awkward feeling of precariousness due to the lack of clear direction, which was in contrast to the “heroic” mood of the previous days:

On Friday I started asking myself where this entire thing was leading to and I had no answer either. And there was no one there to enlighten us. In contrast to that, on Thursday night I was very enthusiastic because I went out to the Patision Street and I saw that there were ... I don't know if there were thousands of people, they must have been thousands. All these people were shouting, "Tonight Fascism is dying," and yes, I was very enthusiastic. But on Friday in the morning I had a ... not exactly fear, but a freezing sentiment. That I don't know any more what I'm doing here and no one does. ... From Friday onward I think that there was a generalized perplexity. Up to that it was, say, heroic. You know, we were organizing life, the crews which were writing the pamphlets, the CCO, the radio station, all of this. There was an excitement of everything, of the emotions, of the sensations, of all situations. I think that on Friday this thing started becoming perplexed and more difficult and, in the end, we had to organize pharmacies and surgeries. And it was getting onto another, entirely different track. (Xydi, interview)

At the same time, inside the building, the CCO faced a dilemma on which it could not reach consensus: whether to proceed to a "victorious" withdrawal without victims or to go on with the occupation on Saturday in order to "have the place put on fire."¹⁴¹ As the first option was becoming increasingly unrealistic, the occupation steadily began to lose a coherent vision and became a series of emotional moments with no articulate philosophy, risking a devastating assault by government forces.

Contemporaneously, from about 6 PM onwards fever-pitch demonstrations started taking place in the center of Athens. A part of the crowd tried to march towards the central Syntagma Square and another one surrounded and attacked the Ministries of Employment and Education, and Attica's Municipality. As AASPE explained after the Polytechnic: "The people rushed in order to occupy public buildings, symbols of bourgeois state violence and oppression."¹⁴² In several instances buses and trolleys were used as barricades while fires were lit throughout the central roads, which were closed. The police initially responded by sending teargas canisters into the crowd but soon resorted to opening fire. Shortly before 10 PM and while the news of the first casualties among the protesters started arriving, an angry unidentified crowd tried to make its way into the Ministry of Public Order. This particular instance marked a systematic use of cocktail bombs on the part of the protesters and an escalation of the confrontations with the police forces that reached unprecedented levels. Giorgos Kotanidis writes with emotion

about the moment he launched his first Molotov cocktail, unprecedented throughout the seven years of dictatorship:

I took my lighter outside my pocket, I checked it and went to the 3rd of September Street, where the armored vehicles were stationed and they were throwing teargas against a large group of young people. . . . I slowly approached them from behind, put fire to the wick, threw the Molotov cocktail to the last armored vehicle and saw its rear explode, setting it on fire. Success with the first blow.¹⁴³

Kevin Andrews recalled in later years “the tang of combat in the nostrils: the smell of smoke, gas, gunpowder, and no more alternatives.” His conclusion, however, that “years of collective boredom had given way to a few minutes of individual responsibility,”¹⁴⁴ paints the facts with too broad a brush. Though it may be applicable to the majority of the Greek society, it does not apply to the dissident few who had brought about the occupation and the conflict with the regime.

Despite the fact that this was the first and last time wide-scale riots occurred during the seven years of the Colonels’ dictatorship (even a bank was attacked), the orders given by police headquarters were false and misleading, reporting that a thousand demonstrators were using weapons, policemen were being slaughtered by enraged workers, and crowds were isolating a phalanx of armed vehicles.¹⁴⁵ Capitalizing on this misinformation, Undersecretary of Public Order Zournatzis argued in a Pasolinian fashion, “If today there are violent clashes between protesters and policemen, who try not to use violent means, then the one who embodies the real revolutionary spirit should be the police and not the protesters.”¹⁴⁶ When some major political figures, such as the right-wing intellectual Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, the last prime minister before the Junta, passed by the Polytechnic, Zournatzis expressed his surprise that respectable figures were coming out to support an entirely “anarchical” movement.

The government’s description of the movement as anarchical was a conscious attempt to evoke memories of the constant social turmoil of “the anarchy,” as the years prior to 1967 were frequently called. Zournatzis did not miss the chance, moreover, to draw parallels with December 1944, when British troops got involved in a bloody conflict with the Greek communist guerrillas over the control of Athens, leaving dozens of dead behind, ravaging the capital, and marking the official start of long-term civil strife. These so-called December events left a dark legacy of particular cruelty and a considerable number of civilian victims on both sides; the Junta aimed to create alarming associations with these memories in labeling the Polytechnic as

“anarchy.” Previously, rightist propaganda had equated the “Red December” with the popular unrest of July 1965. Interestingly, it was not just the regime that was drawing parallels to that key moment in Greece’s recent political history. The Coordinating Committee of the Polytechnic occupation was warning the crowds not to use the word “people’s rule” (*laokratia*) as it would “awaken bitter memories,” since this had been a famous rallying cry of the communists in Athens in late 1944.¹⁴⁷

Eventually, the regime dropped its passive stance toward the Polytechnic occupation and the movement that was unfolding in the streets of Athens and opted for measures of extreme repression. Snipers were placed on top of buildings surrounding the Polytechnic, and they started shooting protesters shortly before midnight. The students initially thought that the bullets were plastic, whereas later on rumors were spread that they were dum-dum bullets, as people who got hit bore unnaturally severe wounds. Ultimately, twenty-four civilians were killed outside the Polytechnic gates and in the nearby streets; none of the students barricaded inside were killed. Even though there was plenty of state violence and a number of casualties throughout the entire seven years of the dictatorship, this was the only time that the regime resorted to such extremes, attacking large crowds of unidentified people and causing widespread bloodshed. Andrianos Vanos, a student from Salonica who went to Athens in order to participate in the events, made contradictory statements about this last day of the occupation, initially describing it as “the most beautiful day of my life” but then calling the evening’s clashes “the saddest demonstration I have ever been to” (Vanos, interview). The duality of his testimony reflects the biographical tension between exaltation and trauma, as well as the transition of the Polytechnic itself from a celebratory process to a massacre.

As tear gas was thrown from the Polytechnic up to Omonoia and Syntagma Squares and people lit fires in order to confront it, the radio station gave instructions on how to deal with the fumes. It also asked for help from the Red Cross for the wounded. *Katerina remembers, “In the School of Architecture they were pulling out the desks from the drawing tables and were making stretchers for the wounded” (*Katerina, interview). The radio announcers insisted, “We are unarmed,” and the slogan of the day became “No more blood.” A standard point of reference in life stories is overriding fear. Karystiani once more draws an opposition between the frightened “people” and the fearless “kids”:

I’m telling you, there were five thousand kids at the Polytechnic, and they were all ready to die. No one was afraid, there were tanks all around, if one only thinks of that moment, that there were tanks all around, it was dark, bullets were flying, some kids were already

killed, in the medical office they were bringing people, I remember they brought one whose leg was hanging from a slight piece of flesh, I saw killed ones, I saw ... and no one at that moment went away in order to save his skin. (Karystiani, interview)

When asked which were the strongest memories from the Polytechnic occupation, Sabatakakis portrayed a powerful image of chaos and fear: “The bullets were falling like haze, they were flying next to our heads, and we didn’t know if we would die any second” (Sabatakakis, interview). As the number of people killed or wounded rose, things started getting out of hand. Damofli emphasizes the presence and massacre of high-school students as her strongest and most poignant memory: “The presence of high-school students and their action during the Polytechnic occupation was something sensational, I’ll never forget it” (Damofli, interview). Karystiani also refers to the high-school students: “The kids were a bit further out, they were playing truant from their moms and the tutorials in order to come over there. It was easier and more barbaric to look at a child and shoot at it” (Karystiani, interview). In fact, several of the officially recognized Polytechnic dead happened to be schoolchildren. *Katerina argues that a couple of years earlier, many of these same kids were jumping into the Omonoia Square fountain to celebrate Panathinaikos’s victory against Red Star Belgrade in football. In her view, most of them used to be apolitical youth who were involved in different everyday activities from the politicized students. She speculates about a radical change taking place inside them, transforming many of these “motorcycle freaks” into political activists overnight:

Whereas before they used to have posters of motorcycles and women in their garages, now they tore them apart and made wallpaper out of hand-written slogans, “Down with the Junta of Papadopoulos” and so forth. That is, in a few days, all those, all this myth about the youth which was disoriented, football-friendly and this and that, collapsed. And I think that this means that no one should ever underestimate the young people, and not just during the Polytechnic. These kids knew nothing about Marcuse, Koligiannis, or Zachariadis, which we thought very important, but they came immediately, they got the spirit—and with less hesitation than many of us who were discussing the organized versus the spontaneous and so on. (*Katerina, interview)

This is a powerful, albeit impressionistic, rendering of these average youths’ sudden metamorphosis. Moreover, *Katerina seems to underplay the impor-

tance of the intellectual panoply that student militants, like herself, enjoyed for joining the movement.

Armed vehicles began moving toward the Polytechnic shortly after midnight. Though the Junta reported that the students were armed with rifles and other weapons, the CCO had decided that no cocktail bombs or any sort of weapons should be used against policemen. Similarly, while the Polytechnic laboratories reportedly contained chemical substances that could have been used in order to create explosives, none were made. When the occupation gestalt was suspended between expectation and desperation, the strategy of pacific protest was chosen, marking a clear difference from the occupation's violent Thai prototype. Not everyone agreed with this judgment, of course. Exponent of the previous generation Stergios Katsaros laments the fact that he did not go to the Polytechnic in order to offer his solid theoretical knowledge of revolutionary insurrections and to turn over his explosives for the students' use. Like most of the people involved in the armed struggle, Katsaros was doubtful about the mass movement's dynamics and its decision to reject the use of violence. This line of thought is clear in his autobiographical account through the voice of an anonymous comrade who reproaches the students for serious distortions of Marxist thought: "These brats,' he said, 'think of us elderly ones as cowards, but they themselves have nothing to do with the revolutionary Left. They have arrived, pretending to be revolutionaries. Their aim is to become leaders of the working class.'"148

Writer Maro Douka also belongs to the previous generation, and she too expressed her discontent through her fictional character, Myrsini, invoking the omnipresent shadow of civil strife: "Out in the courtyard we were asking for petrol from the labs to make Molotov cocktails, we're like sitting ducks here under fire, and we haven't even sticks for kindling. But the committees said no, they wouldn't endorse such tactics, we weren't to start another civil war." Referring to a standard phrase concerning the period of Ottoman rule and the servility of Orthodox religious zealots and implying that bravery is not necessarily a characteristic Greek feature, Douka adds with sarcasm: "Either way it was bound to end in violence. Morale among us was running high, we were on course of eternity—*thy murd'rous hand, oh Pasha, sends me to Heaven straight*, the chorus swelled, *thy murd'rous hand*, like an old *rebetiko* song of the city poor, *Pasha oh Pasha send me to the Pearly Gate*, in full cry, like a dithyramb, *thy murdr'ous hand, thy murd'rous hand*."¹⁴⁹ In counterpoint, Douka presents people praising the barricaded students by shouting "Bravely done lads, well done you strugglers, like the heroes of 1821," arguing for a historical continuity in self-sacrifice.¹⁵⁰

Lambros Papadimitrakis, one of the four radio announcers, also argues for this continuity, comparing the occupation to the recollections of students'

parents from the period of Nazi occupation: “They were reminiscent of the stories from the National Resistance, the ones that our fathers were telling us.”¹⁵¹ This kind of framing drew on collective imaginary resources and positioned the Polytechnic firmly next to the wartime resistance of the 1940s and its vanguard organizations. EAM/ELAS were placed in an imaginary lineage with the student uprising that was later verbally consolidated in the slogan “EAM/ELAS, Polytechnic.” Wartime resistance represented a model of the struggles antiregime students were envisioning and a glorious antecedent, as apart from their pedigree in the struggle against fascism, 1940s guerillas had allied themselves with options for radical social change. As Mark Mazower concludes, “the wartime resistance against the Germans became an inescapable analogue to the campaign against the Junta.”¹⁵²

National-religious symbols were also promptly appropriated. Most testimonies report that the church bells were ringing during the night of the tanks’ raid. Certainly, this feature is connected in people’s imagination to a legendary song by Theodorakis, “The Bells Will Ring” [Tha Simanoun oi Kampanes] (1966), in which communist poet Giannis Ritsos’s verses announce a sort of apocalyptic revolutionary arrival, using a strongly Orthodox wording. Music analyst Panos Geramanis maintains that at the very moment that “the tanks broke into the grounds and attacked the people . . . , [popular singer] Bithikotsis’ voice was singing *Hush, the bells will ring any moment now.*”¹⁵³ Thus it is valid in this case to cite anthropologist Michael Herzfeld’s claim that in Greece a common imaginary connects national insurrection with an orthodox “resurrection.”¹⁵⁴

The Greek flag, which people were waving at the gate, and the national anthem were other symbols widely used in the events. The Polytechnic’s Rector Konofagos recalls with an evident sense of pride: “Over the Polytechnic gate at Patision Street the blue and white flag was waving. No other flag stood by its side. The blue and white flag remained the only symbol of the uprising for all four days. The Greek symbol of freedom.”¹⁵⁵ Coordinating Committee member Dimitris Hatzisokratis’s description of a man on a stretcher with his foot torn by a bullet is equally illuminating: “His foot was hanging by a thread and he was singing the National Anthem and raising his arm, making the sign of victory. These are unrepeatable things. To be like this, with your blood flowing like a river, while you are watching it, raising your arm like that and singing the national anthem is a scene that I shall never forget.”¹⁵⁶ Once more, rather than rejecting national symbols, students, and the Left in general, were defending an “authentic” form of Greekness and patriotism. This reached a climax when, after a number of tanks lined up, obviously about to enter the Polytechnic, Dimitris Papatristos, the last radio announcer, began to chant the national anthem—a

nineteenth-century revolutionary poem—in its full version with pomp and emotion.

The tank crashing the gate is recorded in life stories as the climax in the series of highly traumatic moments of the Polytechnic thriller: the flashing of a huge searchlight over the barricaded students was followed by a brief moment of uncertainty, the hasty negotiation between two student representatives and a general, and the final entry of the vehicle. The CCO had requested of the authorities that the students be allowed to evacuate the building at 6.30 AM in the presence of the Red Cross and of representatives of foreign embassies—a probably unrealistic scenario that was rejected on the ground that “the army does not negotiate.” Thanasis Gaifilias, a well-known musician of the time who was barricaded inside the Polytechnic, remembers that most people laughed at what the general said, as he spoke with a heavy peasant accent.¹⁵⁷ His account demonstrates the thin boundaries between tragedy and farce in moments of tension, but it also underlines the sense of superiority young people felt toward the peasant, uncultivated militaries and their subordinates.

Andrianos Vanos recalled that he was the only one to stay in his position when the armored vehicle prepared to enter: “Everybody was on the floor. I said, ‘What’s the difference between up and down, at least I will see what’s going to happen.’ The tank turned, I see the soldier, the soldier sees me, I was



Figure 5.6. A tank is about to crush the Polytechnic gate where students are barricaded, morning hours of 17 November 1973. The bloody ending of the ten months that shook Greece. (Photographer: Aristotelis Sarrikostas)

staring at him, everybody down, I'm standing" (Vanos, interview). Kotanidis recounts in his memoir that the image of the tank approaching the gate reactivated the memory of a war film he had watched in his childhood:

We saw the tanks coming in front of the Polytechnic. I remembered a movie that I had seen when I was little in Salonica, at the "Kentrikon" cinema, showing the Germans entering Prague, with their tanks and the SS parading, inducing fear in the few Czechs who were watching, I do not remember which movie it was, but this scene has stayed unaltered in my memory, as a silent duel between the fully armed conqueror and the unarmed people. This is what came to my mind when I saw the tanks approaching, ... and one of them stopping and pointing at the gate of the Polytechnic, with the soldiers and cops surrounding us.¹⁵⁸

Long before the end of the ten minutes that were offered by the army officers, a M40 tank broke down the central gate and entered the Polytechnic, bulldozing the dean's Mercedes and crushing the legs of a female student, Pepi Rigopoulou. It was 3 AM. The tank was followed by the Marines, who entered with their bayonets pointed at the students, while a large number of policemen waiting outside arrested over a thousand of those who were leaving the Polytechnic en masse. Policemen and gendarmes hit the demonstrators on their heads with nail-studded beams.¹⁵⁹ An industrial school student testified in the trials, referring to films to help him understand the experience: "What happened can only be seen in movies. They were hitting me with clubs and with their feet on my head, on the stomach, wherever they could."¹⁶⁰ Damofli also likens these moments to a Western movie: "And that night Athens was like a Western, bang-bang-bang, you know" (Damofli, interview). On top of these accounts, the resemblance between the real events of the storming Marines inside the Polytechnic and the violent ending of Stuart Hagmann's semi-fictional signature film *The Strawberry Statement*—one of the Greek students' favorites—is quite striking.

Kotanidis and Lionarakis are among the few who remember a tragicomic incident in the middle of this havoc. Like Antonis Liakos's espousal of Brancalone as his alter ego in the previous generation, they also adopt a "heroic-comic" register in order to narrate dramatic events. Self-irony becomes a means of distancing oneself from the lived experience and looking at things from without, with a certain detachment.¹⁶¹ Incidentally, both stories involve tin cans. Accordingly, Kotanidis recalls that immediately prior to the tank's entry he saw a used tin can on the ground and referring to a well-known myth, that the communists used to slit their opponents' throats



Figure 5.7. After the Revolution. The crushed gate of the Polytechnic in daylight. Next to the bulldozed Mercedes of the school’s dean, a gate column with the graffiti “NATO Out.” Other gate columns bore the inscriptions “USA out” and “Allende.” (Photographer: Aristotelis Sarrikostas)

with open tin cans during the Greek civil war, he grabbed his newly acquired “weapon” and shouted “Prepare to attack!”; he records a female cadre of KNE shutting him off, pointing out that this was not an opportune moment for humor: “Really, how did I manage to use humor in the most difficult moments?” he wonders.¹⁶²

Lionarakis’s most vivid memory of the building evacuation, on the other hand, was when he grabbed the cans and money that had been collected for the barricaded students: “Endless food, endless cans, you know, and I left with some 500,000 drachmas in my pockets, which was our money, the money that the people were giving us, you know. And I bagged several cans inside my coat and I had them in there.” In this narrative Lionarakis depicted himself as a grotesque figure, more concerned about food than the tragedy that was unfolding. As Luisa Passerini notes, “Oral testimony draws a veil over more tragic elements—the dead and wounded, the pain and fear—and brings out the symbolic overturning of order characteristic of carnival.”¹⁶³ Lionarakis’s tone changed, however, as he recalled the shocking fact that when he found shelter in a basement upon his exit from the build-

ing, soldiers sang victory marches after their triumphant intervention: “After the evacuation operation, what was terrible was how the trucks were going away with the soldiers, who were singing in a style ‘We screwed them,’ you know, by singing songs, which is very frightening, in the middle of the night to listen to such songs, we didn’t know how many were killed, didn’t know anything at that point” (Lionarakis, interview).

Although this recollection is in accordance with other testimonies,¹⁶⁴ many remember the soldiers as scared and sympathetic adolescents who in fact helped the students get out unharmed, in contrast to the enraged and vulgar policemen. A number of accounts mention that during the students’ frantic search for shelter, many doors were opened in order to briefly accommodate those who were persecuted by the police. Damofli remembers: “And in this condition that man opened up his door and said ‘Guys, come in.’ ... Why did the rest of them not open up their doors? And he gave us blankets, there, they covered us, everything in the dark of course, see? Right across from the Polytechnic” (Damofli, interview). The most glorious moment of student resistance ended, in the best of cases, inside some stranger’s house, in the dark.

The Copycat Occupation

The student mobilizations of mid-November were not confined to Athens alone. The students of Patras occupied that city’s university soon after those of Athens, while Ioannina and Salonica students followed, mimicking what took place in the capital’s universities. The most important of these three events was the one in Salonica, not least because the students there set up a radio station too. During the previous days, the students had gathered in order to protest the expulsion of four of their colleagues. After the Athens occupation began, they adopted a resolution expressing solidarity with their counterparts.¹⁶⁵

It was not until Friday, 16 November, however, that the Salonicean students decided to act, largely due to the hesitation of Rigas and even more so of A-EFEE, whose leadership thought that the whole venture would backfire and would have a negative impact on the movement. Both *Pavlos and Kleopatra Papageorgiou remember that these organizations initially attempted to postpone the assembly until Monday, playing for time, in contrast to the Maoists, who were in favor of rapid, direct action. Petros Oikonomou, a Rigas member and one of the students who had been arrested in the past, thereby acquiring a sort of symbolic status, explains why his organization participated even though it was against the occupation:

We didn't have the luxury of remaining out of it and of denouncing it. It would have been stupid on our side because we would dissolve the student movement, we would cause fragmentation. Surely, we realized how wrong the tactic was and where it leads to and whose game it plays. . . . I remember, we had an assembly before entering the Polytechnic, the team in which I participated, the clandestine one, and the conclusion we arrived at was that we were going to commit suicide. (Oikonomou, interview)

Oikonomou's insistence that for some people the entire venture seemed like a suicide mission highlights the fact that on behalf of these students, and despite the spontaneity of the moment and the willingness to reenact what was happening in Athens, there was a cost-benefit analysis. However, extreme pragmatism was abandoned in favor of not causing rifts inside the movement.

At this point, the Maoists took the initiative for an occupation, "being closer to the feeling of the moment."¹⁶⁶ The spontaneous entry of more students led to a gathering of around 2,500 students inside the School of Architecture. Later on, they set up a fourteen-member Coordinating Committee, which soon declared, "Today, the sixteenth of November, we students of Salonica have occupied the building of the Polytechnic in order to express our opposition to the Junta." *Pavlos points out that he and several of his companions preferred to stay out of the committee in order to "better guide" the occupation from outside: "If we had been inside, we wouldn't have been lucid enough" (*Pavlos, interview).

Unlike in Athens, the slogans that the students wrote were not filtered. They included typical incitements to an alliance with the workers ("Workers and farmers unite"), which never materialized, and anti-American ones like those used in Athens ("Americans out," "NATO out"), but also quite direct anti-imperialist ones ("People, strike the lackeys of the colonizers!"). Other slogans referred to the mythical Greek people who were finally going to act ("The people have awakened," "Freedom is not donated, it is conquered," "Long live people's power"), while yet another anticipated the arrival of the policemen and the pro-regime forces: "Informers, rub in order to expunge them [the slogans]."¹⁶⁷ In his account of the events, Chrysafis Iordanoglou, a member of the Coordinating Committee and a Rigas leader, expresses his bitterness at the fact that no control was allowed, nor was the possibility of a police raid discussed, while some leftists believed that they could overthrow the Junta here and now, and "maybe the capitalist system too."¹⁶⁸ Oikonomou shares this perception and castigates the extremist tendency that characterized the younger members of the movement: "Until the evening everyone

was inside, everyone, even the little kids who were saying for the first time that ‘we are going to fight against the Junta,’ you know, who on the top were the most dangerous ones. Certainly they were thinking that they were starting the civil war” (Oikonomou, interview).

The statement that came out of the Coordinating Committee was that the takeover was an act designed “to express our antithesis to the Junta.”¹⁶⁹ In Salonica, as in Athens, an ad hoc first aid center, press room, and refectory were created.¹⁷⁰ A radio station was set up as well, though its frequency was much weaker than the one in Athens. In between playing Theodorakis songs, the station denounced “Stayer” and “Esso Pappas,” two prominent representatives of local and foreign “capital,” as seeking to control university research through their funded programs. It further called for people’s solidarity. Klearchos Tsaousidis, who alongside Thomas Vasileiadis was one of the “grandfathers” in the student movement, calls the demands immature, at least in retrospect:

What we all said during the developments looks afterward a bit stupid and immature. Alright. So, when we invited people to come and express solidarity with us, we knew that they wouldn’t come. Of course in Athens people went out. Here they didn’t, also considering where we were. Yet another tragic mistake. How could people come over there? However, we showed our desire about where we wanted this thing to go: we wanted popular participation. (Tsaousidis, interview)

In fact, the physical distance from the rest of the city was a major limitation in attracting more people to express their solidarity at the Polytechnic School of Salonica, where the occupation took place. In contrast to Athens where simple passersby could stop by the occupied building in its central location, in order for someone to reach the barricaded students in Salonica, one had to cross the entire campus, in an unpopulated area.

It has often been argued that the radio station in Salonica was extreme in its articulation of the students’ demands—perhaps an unsurprising development, as Kleopatra Papageorgiou, who was the main speaker at the station, was a radical. Vanos argued that no one expressed reservations at the time to those who had the courage to act: “Whoever had the guts took the microphone at the Polytechnic, and this is what made up the radio station, period. No one has ever doubted this. When she said, ‘I am going to do it’ ... They knew Kleopatra, she was a pretty dynamic woman, she took the microphone and made a mess” (Vanos, interview). The Coordinating Committee did not seek to approve the texts that were announced, and by and large the speakers

broadcasted all texts that they were given. Papageorgiou recalls: “We were saying everything, there was no censorship in our station, there was much freedom. You know what we were saying, all being communists. Of course in the station we didn’t say for example, ‘Down with capitalism’ and stuff like that. We were saying more anti-Junta and anti-imperialist things.” Though she boasts that the radio speakers enjoyed absolute freedom to announce any text that came before their eyes, Papageorgiou confesses that she imposed a censorship of sorts in order to reach a wider consensus:

Well, okay, these slogans were a bit restricted because we wanted to preserve the mass form, not to chase away the more conservative ones—there were many of them inside—not at that moment to even clash with A-EFEE for example, which was totally against. These had entered and were throwing around leaflets saying, “Get out of here, these are provocations,” “Who brought you together?” “You are playing the game of reaction with this action,” this kind of crap. We didn’t want to clash with them by saying overly extreme slogans on the station; we tried to express all streams in order to keep them inside too. (Papageorgiou, interview)

Here too, therefore, the sloganeering was conditioned by the announcer’s judgment. She further notes: “Back then, we were distinguished from each other by subtle nuances. If, for example, you said ‘Down with the Junta,’ you were from KKE-Esoterikou. If you said ‘Death to fascism and to imperialism,’ you were a Maoist” (laughter).

Iordanoglou, in contrast, laments the fact that although the first radio program started in a moderate way,¹⁷¹ it soon degraded into an anti-imperialist delirium (“the foreign enslaved fascist dictatorship,” “struggle against the foreign capital and the American-European imperialists”) and an argument against the “system,” concluding that only with the final victory of the Greek people and the death of imperialism would the country be free again. To this end, the announcer declared, “Let’s struggle by all means.”¹⁷² Klearchos Ts-aousidis stresses that a committee effectively controlled the station’s program after midnight:

All texts passed through a particular committee and were filtered. There were no other things such as “down with the state” and so on ... that is the stuff that would worry petit-bourgeois people, at times also the democratic left-winger. From twelve o’clock onward, there was much filtering. Only the moment when the evacuation started and in which the kids from that particular radical Left group

controlled things did [Kleopatra] take back the microphone and say some hypercombative things. (Tsaousidis, interview)

As a climax of its appeal to the Greek people, the station proposed: “Greek intellectuals, enlighten the new struggles of our people with your spirit, express in your words the new struggles of our people. Communicate a faith for a better life. Stand next to the worker, the farmer, the student!”¹⁷³

While the students were resting in the hours after midnight, news started to come in about the Athens bloodshed. Vourekas recalls the CCO’s concern about the effect this news would have on the barricaded students’ morale:

The night in which the Athens Polytechnic got hit, we got to know about it before we were encircled, that is, the Coordinating Committee was informed about it. And there it was decided not to tell anyone, in some way say, “Alright, the tanks appeared, let’s not talk about the dead, so as not to let the people panic.” But people had transistors which were transmitting foreign stations. Despite this, the people didn’t break. (Vourekas, interview)

Starting at 3:30 AM, the Polytechnic of Salonica was encircled by army vehicles too. The committee members were given half an hour for the students to evacuate the building. At 4:30 on Saturday morning, 17 November, three armed vehicles and two units of commando/marine troops were standing by outside the Polytechnic. A little later, the Coordinating Committee negotiated with the university and military authorities for an unconditional evacuation, contrary to the students’ wish. The radio station’s final announcement that followed bears striking resemblances to the final dramatic appeal of the radio station in Athens:

We are talking to you from the radio station of the free University of Salonica. If the army strikes at us, if even one bullet gets fired, no one can be without responsibility for it. ... We ask of the soldiers to understand that we are brothers, our enemy is a common one. ... We address the Greek people and the entire free world with an appeal to take a position. We ask the soldiers not to obey an order to shoot. We ask you to take a position. Don’t turn it off. This is the last moment. The people want to listen.¹⁷⁴

As with Papachristos, the radio announcer at the Athens Polytechnic, here too an appeal was made to the humanity of the soldiers and to the fact that they were “brothers.” Similarly to the events in Prague during the Soviet in-

vasion in August 1968 the students tried to convince the soldiers—to whom they were actually coetaneous—of the futility of their actions and their moral obligation to join their struggle by defying their orders; but to no avail.

Within half an hour, the students had started to come out. Descriptions of their exodus stress the savagery of the beatings they received and the immediate arrest of about two hundred people. Iordanoglou feels very proud that there were no fatalities, on the committee's responsibility,¹⁷⁵ while a former comrade of his, of Maoist inclinations, expresses a quite different opinion: "If in retrospect no one was killed, this is among the pros during a peaceful period. During a revolutionary period it is a con. In a revolutionary period you do not feel sorry for the dead people, you hate the ones who killed them" (*Pavlos, interview). There is a discrepancy between these two attitudes, clearly delineating disparate points of view on the past, a moderate and a radical one. *Pavlos's Jacobin analysis reflects the conviction of the time that this was a "revolutionary period" with specific characteristics and needs. Maoist and Trotskyist groups, such as EDE, effectively interpreted the student revolt of November 1973 as a "revolutionary situation." They lamented not having the necessary organizational structures to take advantage of this moment. One official document of the EDE warned: "Revolution has come, and we have got very little time left to build the Party."¹⁷⁶ *Pavlos expresses resentment at the occupation's lack of casualties, that the students did not struggle to the last drop of blood. This position is—once again—strongly reminiscent of the declaration of Simon, the protagonist of *The Strawberry Statement*: "If there's blood, I hope there are massive casualties."

After the evacuation many of the Salonica protesters, like those in Athens, went into hiding. Vourekas describes the prevailing effect of that time: "And I remember that feeling of fear, I remember noises out of sheet metal, because there were roofs made out of sheet metal, and every now and then I woke up in a nightmarish way, feeling that . . . Because after [the occupation] repression was total" (Vourekas, interview). Arrested and tortured shortly after the occupation, he retains intense memories of the feeling of panic toward the unknown that possessed him, despite his belief that by that time he had "mastered" fear—a situation that many experienced.

In both cities, to most of the participants who were either arrested or went into hiding, it was still pretty unclear what the occupations had managed to achieve. However, apart from being the most massive acts of resistance against the military dictatorship—prompting for the first time thousands of people to actively protest—what the November 1973 occupations mainly achieved was far beyond student interests and aspirations: by exposing the dark underbelly of the Junta they practically canceled the "liberalization experiment" of Georgios Papadopoulos, which would have turned Greece to

a “paternalistic democracy” under the tutelage of the army, just like 1970s Turkey or 1980s Chile. However, at the same time they had unwillingly opened the way for the hard-liners within the regime and for Papadopoulos’s overthrow by one of his most trusted men: Brigadier Dimitrios Ioannidis, the notorious head of ESA.

After the Revolution

Prior to the Polytechnic, the student movement catalyzed state violence to reveal that the regime’s liberalization was only a facade. With the storming of the Polytechnic, however, the regime went too far in continuing to try to keep up appearances. Consequently, although the movement and democratic civil society won a moral advantage at the Polytechnic, the tactical battle was already largely lost. Immediately after the morning of 18 November, decree 798/1971, which prescribed steps to be taken “in a situation of siege,” was put into action. According to a later government announcement, Prime Minister Markezinis assumed responsibility for the “bloodless,” as he called it, suppression of the popular uprising in his speech to the General Staff on 20 November.

Among the first things that the government did was to talk about the huge damage to the Polytechnic premises in both Athens and Salonica, estimated at several billion drachmas. In Salonica, pro-regime student newspaper *O Foititis* reported the events in a way that reflects how regime-friendly and apolitical students regarded the incident. It ran pictures accompanied by commentary expressing indignation about the disastrous state of the Polytechnic buildings: one caption remarked on “a sight of filthiness and misery,” noting with sarcasm, “And then they tell you that they struggle for a better world, for beauty.” In an article titled “They Abandoned Their Cars in order to Deliver the Proletariat,” the paper castigated the “anarchist minority” that did not show proper respect to the people who paid for their education, and it expressed outrage about the anti-Western slogans written on the walls. Ironic comments were made about the misspellings and content of the students’ slogans, such as “People, let’s fight, they’re sucking up your blood!”:

The Polytechnic is ravaged. The hordes of the defenders of academic freedom and popular sovereignty piled up in the auditoria and the labs of the buildings, mounted on the benches, broke the glass, tore down documents and drawings, turned the furniture upside down and covered the walls with misspelled slogans which they took from other epochs. Parading the walls of the Polytechnic were Allende,

Thailand, bread, the farmers, the Americans, “the People, whose blood has been sucked up.” The “proletarians of all countries unite.” Nothing remained intact. And why did all this happen? Not because no solution was given to student demands, but, on the contrary, because no considerable student problems have remained unsolved.

The article’s main accusation was that students of left-wing sensitivities were the wealthier ones, who were driving their own cars—a definite luxury at the time—and therefore utterly hypocritical. *O Foititis* reproduced the usual polemic concerning left-wing rhetoric:

And who were among the ones who “gave battle”? Those who leave their cars in the courtyard and enter the Polytechnic with their pockets full of banknotes, in order to pose as contestatory proletarians. These people, whose future is guaranteed. These people, to whom it does not make a difference whether free education exists or not. But the provocation of the “bourgeois proletarians” did not remain without a response. The wave of indignation from the rest of the students—regardless of faculty and social origins—resulted in their expulsion from the premises of the University of Salonica.¹⁷⁷

Most of this damage the article cites was perpetrated by the Junta itself; in contrast to the Sorbonne in May 1968, which was left in a terrible state,¹⁷⁸ the Polytechnic in Athens—and to a lesser extent the Salonica Polytechnic—was preserved as clean and tidy as possible, as the Greek students did not wish to be smeared as “anarchists.” Nevertheless, by governmental decree, twenty-eight local societies were disbanded in Athens, Salonica, and Ioannina, while their property was confiscated according to the decree 2636/1940 on “expropriation of enemy assets,”¹⁷⁹ which had been passed during the 1940 Greek-Italian War. This action, in other words, regarded the student associations as an internal enemy.

The Polytechnic occupation was the student movement’s highest peak, during which the students managed to mobilize Greek society for the first time. The movement degenerated soon after due to the governmental cataclysm that followed, which included the overthrow of Papadopoulos by a group of hawks inside the Junta. A week later, on 25 November, Papadopoulos and his constitutional construct collapsed under the weight of another military coup by a group that would rule the country arbitrarily, with martial law in full operation. The Polytechnic events thus discredited the “liberalization experiment” that had aimed at a long-lasting authoritarian state with a democratic façade. Marxist theorist Nikos Poulantzas argued that the fact

that the dictatorship was by and large dependent on violence in order to block dissent made it impossible for it “to direct its own transformation.” “Controlled liberalization on the part of the state,” he explained, created “a gaping hole through which the popular movement rushed in” as the Colonels failed to secure the “neutrality of the intelligentsia and the youth.”¹⁸⁰

The person pulling the strings behind the scene was Brigadier-General Ioannidis, head of ESA, nicknamed “the invisible dictator.” With the transition from Papadopoulos to Ioannidis, the regime passed from a “personal” to an “impersonal” phase, as Ioannidis was hardly ever seen, instead letting the president of the republic, General Faidon Gizikis, do the job for him. Ioannidis, a hard-liner, decided to take the Junta back to the days of the iron fist and genuine authoritarianism.¹⁸¹ He had already formed plans for a December 1973 coup that had to be rescheduled because of the Polytechnic uprising. Some analysts maintain that Ioannidis might even have allowed the Polytechnic to happen in order to gain support from the hard-liners by demonstrating the bankruptcy of Papadopoulos’s experiment.

Ioannidis’s period (25 November 1973–23 July 1974) brought about stagnation and a denouement to the student movement. During the eight months of its existence, no open action against the regime was recorded. Many student militants remained incarcerated, while others went into hiding. Most life stories portray this phase as the darkest of all. Nikos Bistis is adamant: “After the Polytechnic these were the worst days, the worst days, and psychologically also the worst days. A very tough Junta had arrived, and by looking at the facts those who had common sense were asking themselves whether we did well by pushing it so far” (Bistis, interview). In his memoirs too, Bistis defends his cautious stance during the days of the Polytechnic and debates the correctness of the decision to occupy the Polytechnic in November 1973.

Angeliki Xydi strongly remembered the disillusionment that she experienced when she got out of prison and tried to gain some new contacts in the university with no success. Contrary to Bistis, however, she was quick to note that the movement had gained respect thanks to its militancy: “I believe that the people that had mobilized before had a very high status, that is, they enjoyed a certain appreciation from the rest, be it the rest of the students or faculty members” (Xydi, interview).

The new regime decided to deal with student activism in a drastic way. Authoritarianism in its fullest form, as fantasized and practiced by Ioannidis, did not allow for any sort of student mobility. A social movement needs constant mobilization, however, in order to evolve and stay alive. When a movement’s capacity to react and handle a crisis is weakened, stagnation and dissolution threaten.¹⁸² Not only did the Greek student movement suffer the

terrible blow of the night of the tanks in the Polytechnic, but it also experienced a dramatic regime change, accompanied by draconian measures. By February 1974, the main operational figures of A-EFEE and by May those of EKKE had been identified and arrested. This was a great blow, and the initiatives undertaken by remaining cadres who aspired to a massive demonstration or a general student strike were never realized.

To make things worse, the legacy of the Polytechnic divisions left the student movement as fragmented as ever. In the very aftermath of the uprising the general secretary of KKE-Esoterikou, Babis Drakopoulos, talked about “dark forces” that had infiltrated the students, trying to lead the occupation down a dangerous path. Not long after the events, KNE’s mouthpiece, *Panspoudastiki*, in its infamous issue no. 8, more outspokenly castigated the three hundred and fifty students who incited the revolt as *agents provocateurs*, employed by the intelligence services.¹⁸³ Among them, the arch-*provocateur* was supposedly the Maoist leader Dionysis Mavrogenis, who was dubbed a government agent and had to hide for months both from the regime and from his communist denunciators. Stelios Kouloglou remembers feeling indignant at this injustice:

When Mavrogenis was labeled a stool pigeon I entirely set myself apart from the group, I said that’s it. I didn’t say to anybody but I thought that these people were ... I knew Mavrogenis, I have seen him being beaten, we started off together. I said, no way it is him, because one knows some things, you cannot believe that someone who has been beaten up next to you, you have been scared together, you have been through. ... Stool pigeons are not like this. (Kouloglou, interview)

The movement reached an impasse. No one knew the characteristics of the new regime, nor could they foresee how long it would last in its attempt to revive the true spirit of the “Revolution.” A large number of students who had been involved in mass actions under Papadopoulos remained in strict clandestinity, passing their time in the houses of friends and relatives. Michalis Sabatakakis recalls: “I changed houses twenty-two or twenty-three times during the nine months from the Polytechnic to the *Metapolitefsi*. For a long time, ESA people were going to my place with rifles” (Sabatakakis, interview). Vera Damoffi also remembers that she frequently changed hideouts and slept in all sorts of places. In the present, such recollections have an amusing aspect: “Alright, it was fun too,” she says. Damoffi argues that young people who provided accommodation were often people who had not participated actively in the movement and were thus paying tribute. She recalls one hideout:

I remember another house that was full of comics [laughter]. A very beautiful flat, a student one too. These guys, you know, were at the fringes [of the movement]. They would come along sometimes too, but they hadn't come forward. And this was a flat with its bookshelves full of Mickey Mouse, you know, Lucky Luke, if it existed back then, I don't remember. And it was so nice, and they brought us roasted gourd-seed too. These are the memories, you see. (Damofli, interview)

In this example, the seriousness of the students' act of hiding is tempered by the frivolity of the flat's main feature: comics, a funny, popular culture item. In introducing this casual element in her interview, Damofli counterbalances her dramatic and charged description of the Polytechnic evacuation that immediately preceded it, underlining the fact that even in this bleakest of periods there could be moments of lightness.

In contrast to this ambivalence, *Katerina likens this period to the absolute darkness of a second German occupation where there could be neither escape nor escapism. In her narrative the dictators are presented not as real Greeks, but as foreign lackeys (a well-known trope of left-wingers at the time):

I remember being spied on, many of my friends were being spied on. There were many friends of mine who were not in the Polytechnic who did not greet me when they saw me because they were afraid that I possibly knew someone. . . . It was in general a period of German occupation. Then the great blow against KNE happened, and I think of the Political Bureau of the KKE in February '74, and the only activity we had were some contacts with the Deutsche Welle, with the BBC, with broadcasters abroad in order to learn about the news of the prisoners, to see if they died or if they were still alive and who else did they arrest, who else were they going to catch.

The only optimistic news that she recalls during Ioannidis's period were the anticolonial wars that led to the Carnation Revolution in Portugal: "The sole stimuli were Portugal, Angola, Guinea Bissau" (*Katerina, interview).

Whereas *Katerina's mind was set on Portugal, several students who were persecuted by the regime during this period tried to make their way to Great Britain. Others sought postgraduate grants for the same purpose. John Spraos, a Greek professor of economics at University College London, was an intermediary in these attempts, as he headed the London-based Greek Committee Against the Dictatorship. His correspondence with several British professors reveals that Greek student activists were often denied entrance

and grants due to their low marks. A Greek professor contacted Spraos about a student named Emmanouil Tzannetis—one of the students that had been tried in February 1973 at the “Trial of the Eleven”—and was quick to explain: “Mr Tzannetis was actively involved in the student movement of recent years. Because of the persecutions that his family suffered, an inevitability after his involvement, this led to a fall in his performance, which is reflected in his marks.”¹⁸⁴ Tzannetis’s sister Evi, an architecture student, was reportedly warned after her release from EAT-ESA: “This academic year was lost. If you want to miss another one, keep on being involved in student issues.”¹⁸⁵ In his own letters of recommendation, Spraos typically referred indirectly to Greek students’ poor marks, saying that a particular student’s “record is not brilliant,” and he instead stressed other things, such as the “trials and tribulations” that the students had “undergone in the hands of the Greek regime.” As Spraos noted in a letter to an English professor concerning student leader Giorgos Vernikos’s anti-Junta activities, “This was a full-time occupation.” Accordingly, Vernikos’s “marks interpreted in the light of all this seem very creditable—even a genius could not be expected to have high examination marks under these circumstances.”¹⁸⁶ Eventually, Vernikos made it out of Greece to Switzerland, though he never acquired postgraduate status.

All this became redundant, when Ioannidis’s regime entered a precarious phase because of an ill-thought coup it masterminded in Cyprus on 15 July 1974 against President Makarios, which eventually led to its collapse. The subsequent invasion of the island by Turkey caught Ioannidis entirely unprepared. Interior struggles between the hard-liners and the soft-liners, taken together with the Cypriot adventure, brought the Junta to a stalemate. Guillermo O’Donnell and Philip Schmitter’s assertion that a transition’s beginning is the direct or indirect consequence “of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself” is therefore absolutely accurate in the Greek case.¹⁸⁷ It was the members of the military themselves who decided that their regime had become dispensable and that it should be handed over to civilians in order to lead the country out of the crisis. With a demoralized army and a complete absence of coordination, the Greek military machine was not in a position to respond to what was considered to be a *casus belli* by Turkey, despite the general mobilization that General Faidon Gizikis ordered on 20 July. It was Gizikis himself, accompanied by the three heads of staff, who asked representatives of the “old politicians” to take over. They, in turn, asked the self-exiled Constantine Karamanlis to come and lead a civilian government; Karamanlis eventually formed a “government of national unity.”

Vera Damofli offers an interesting metaphysical association between nature and political developments when she tries to recall 23 July 1974, the day the Junta fell:

And I think it hailed the previous day in Athens, though it was July. Crack-crack-crack. . . I was hidden in a basement back then. “What the hell is going on?” And yes, the Junta fell. It was terrific to go out in the streets. Surely, the police were chasing that day too, there was a panic, it was mad. On the one hand, the cars were beeping; on the other hand, people were dancing and jumping in the streets. It was very beautiful. (Damofli, interview)

Angeliki Xydi remembers that during these days of crisis and transformation she was on holiday on the island of Anafi, “for the very reason that life had everything, it had vacations too [laughter].” She continues: “And I urgently took the first caique that was leaving for Naxos in order to take the first boat to Athens, and there I found myself some days later under some balcony shouting ‘two Ks and one E equals KKE’” (Xydi, interview). All these narratives underline the extreme abruptness of this unexpected regime change.

The ruthless regime of Ioannidis did not last more than eight months but, nevertheless, managed to leave a very intelligible trace of extreme repression, especially in the form of the Cyprus tragedy. However, if the students played an important role in the ultimate overthrow of the Papadopoulos regime by his former protégé, they did not have any involvement in the collapse of the Ioannidis regime, which happened by and large because of an imminent Greek-Turkish military conflict. Just like in Portugal in April 1974, it was events outside the country—in that case the African colonies, in this one Cyprus—that sealed the fate of the dictatorial regime.

Metapolitefsi and Beyond

When on 24 July 1974 the military decided to hand over power to the politicians, the period of the *Metapolitefsi*, or regime change, began. Although the majority of the people were ecstatic about this unexpected change, the core of the Left, including most students, remained skeptical. Most of them thought of the return of Karamanlis to power as a “change of NATO-ist guard,” which stressed the element of continuity between the Junta and the government that succeeded it. Such continuity did not fulfill the Left’s hope for radical sociopolitical change, which had partly fuelled the antidictatorship student movement. Former student dissident Panagiotis Xanthopoulos, for example, saw the transition as a major setback: “This was the least that could result from what we were experiencing as a movement all these years” (Xanthopoulos, interview).

In 1980 there was a march to the American Embassy when Kanelopoulou was killed. We were sitting at the corner of Filellinon and Othonos Street and saw the people who were getting beaten there, and I left. I didn't want to get into trouble anymore. There I realized that I had matured, I became conscious of the danger. (Kourmoulakis, interview)

The police—an institution with a “long memory,” to quote Kristin Ross's Balzacean conclusion²¹¹—was the last arm of the state to be democratized, and in activists' minds this stood as a synecdoche for the entire state. Vestiges of authoritarianism persisted in state practices throughout the late 1970s, tainting the image of the “model” transition but also the idea of the clean break with the past. Therefore, the decade-long sensitivity of the Greek state toward the so-called university asylum—the total ban of police from university premises unless a specific demand is voiced by the university authorities—should not come as a surprise, as it constitutes a direct offspring of the legacy of 1973.

Certainly, after 1981, with the advent of the socialist PASOK's rise to power, things changed radically. For most of the protagonists of the antidictatorship student movement and despite a common rejection of PASOK's populist tactics, 1981 marked the actual democratization of the country, as opposed to the interregnum of right-wing governments after 1974 that retained authoritarian residues. The fact that PASOK was a post-1974 incarnation of the third-worldist resistance organization PAK and did not really abandon much of its anti-neocolonial rhetoric until very late, had its own symbolic significance: it was seen by many as the moral victory of the entire generation that had mobilized against the Junta. It was not long after PASOK came to power that it institutionalized the “Polytechnic” as a national celebration.

Notes

1. Kouloubis, “The Greek Junta Phenomenon,” 359.
2. According to della Porta, “repressive and hard policing of protest results in the shrinking of mass movements but a radicalization of smaller protest groups.” See della Porta, “Social Protest,” 92.
3. “A Mosquito on a Bull,” *Economist*, 12 March 1973.
4. For the notion of “expressive behavior” see Pizzorno, “Le due logiche dell'azione di classe,” 13.
5. “Εξαρσις εις το Φοιτητικόν. Απελογήθησαν οι 12 της Εμπορικής [The student issue is booming: The twelve of the School of Commerce have presented their pleas], *Eleftheros Kosmos*, 6 February 1973.

6. “Παρατήθηκε το ΔΣ των Σπουδαστών Μηχανολόγων” [The AC of the Mechanical Engineers’ Society Has Resigned], *Eleftheros Kosmos*, 6 February 1973.
7. “Δίκη των 10 φοιτητών για τις ταραχές του “μικρού” Πολυτεχνείου [Trial of the Ten Students for the “Little” Polytechnic Riots], *Thessaloniki*, 19 February 1973. The pro-regime newspaper *Eleftheros Kosmos* referred to the events as reviving a climate reminiscent of EAM, the communist-led resistance during the German occupation. “Επεισόδια χθες εις το Πολυτεχνείο” [Riots Yesterday at the Polytechnic], 17 February 1973.
8. Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 107.
9. Sontag, *On Photography*, 19.
10. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25.
11. *Thessaloniki*, 19 December 1973.
12. With his long hair and military jacket, Mastorakis attempted to appear familiar to the students as one of them, a person from whom they had nothing to fear. The “interview-interrogation” took place on 18 November 1973.
13. *Thessaloniki*, 22 May 1973.
14. Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 113.
15. Luis Enrique de la Villa and Aurelio Desdentado Bonete’s conclusion that “solidarity strikes and demands for the readmission of sacked workers are a historical constant which define the very identity of the labour movement” is applicable to any sort of social movement. See De la Villa and Desdentado Bonete, *La amnistía laboral*, 22. Quoted in Aguilar Fernández, “Collective Memory of the Spanish Civil War,” 6.
16. Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 121–22.
17. “650–3000 Students Spent the Night “Barricaded” inside the Law School Building,” *Thessaloniki*, 22 February 1973.
18. Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 123.
19. See Sirinelli, *Les baby-boomers*.
20. Mantoglou, *Polytechnic*, 165–66.
21. Coerant, “On their Own,” 117.
22. See Hamalidi et al., “A Second Avant-Garde Without a First,” 10.
23. Bistis, *Moving on and Revising*, 220. Even though Bistis mentions that this incident took place during the Law School occupation, his description applies equally, if not more, to the Polytechnic events.
24. Top Secret, EAT/ESA-TAS to AS/2nd EG-SDA, Athens, 1 March 1973, Dafermos Archive, EDIA.
25. Vernikos, “Personal Testimony,” 149.
26. *Thessaloniki*, 22 February 1973.
27. Iordanoglou, “Antidictatorship Student Movement,” 252.
28. *Thessaloniki*, “Οι δυο λόγιοι του κ. Παπαδόπουλου” [The Two Speeches by Mr. Papadopoulos], 4 March 1973.
29. Ibid.
30. *Thessaloniki*, 20 March 1973.
31. P.-J. Franceschini, “Tout sauf mai 68,” *Le Monde*, 8 March 1973.
32. “Students: Yet Another Attempt,” *Thessaloniki*, 27 February 1973.
33. Raschke, *Soziale Bewegungen*, 363.

34. Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*.
35. Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*, 104.
36. Top Secret, EAT/ESA-TAS to AS/2nd EG-SDA, Athens, 1 March 1973, Dafermos Archive, EDIA.
37. Angelis and Dafermos, *Only a Dream*, 115.
38. The commander and some thirty members of the crew of the destroyer Velos sought and were granted political asylum in Italy.
39. See Klandermans, "Mobilization and Participation," and McAdam, "Recruitment."
40. Della Porta, "1968," 139.
41. Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 132.
42. "Athens Students Quick to Rebel," *Guardian*, 27 October 1972.
43. Paul Rose, "'Vicious' Pressures from Police May Paralyze Opposition," *Chicago Tribune*, August 1972.
44. Vernikos, "Personal Testimony," 151. Vernikos recalls that those belonging to communist organizations blamed him for everything in order to protect their own comrades.
45. Papachristos, "Law School to the Polytechnic," 195.
46. "'Threat' to Greek Woman in Cell," *Guardian*, 14 November 1973. Deleted expletive in original.
47. Darveris, *Students and Dictatorship*, 332.
48. Arseni, *Nelle carceri*. Almost forty years later this attitude has not entirely changed, which points to how persistent both the trauma and taboo remain. See, for example, the moving documentary by Alinda Dimitriou *Rain Girls* [Ta Koritsia tis Vrochis] (2011) on women tortured during the Junta.
49. On the issue of the extreme difficulty of dealing with the past trauma that involves (sexual) torture also see the interesting novella by Elias Maglinis, *The Interrogation*. In Maglinis's view the historical trauma is in some way inherited and transmitted from generation to generation.
50. Typically, organizations advised students to hold out for twenty-four hours to allow their comrades, who by then would be informed of the arrest, to change hideouts. See, for example, Kotanidis, *All Together, Now!*, 326.
51. Passerini, "Wounded Memory."
52. Paraskevopoulos, "Notes," 70.
53. Kotanidis, *All Together, Now!*, 379 and 475.
54. On this issue see Voglis, *Becoming a Subject*.
55. Alivizatos, *Political Institutions*, 294.
56. For an elaboration of this term see Fishman, "Rethinking State and Regime," 428. Also see Tzortzis, "The *Metapolitēfsi* That Never Was."
57. See US Ambassador Tasca's report, USNA, Pol 15 Greece, American Embassy Athens, "The Papadopoulos-Markezinis Tandem: Prospects for the Return to Parliamentary Government in Greece," 17 October 1973.
58. Papadopoulos would be the uncontested president, with General Odysseus Angelis as vice-president, up to 1981. The president according to the new constitution was endowed with the right to create a legal context of his own liking for the first elections, reserving the right to appoint the ministers of defense, foreign affairs, and public order and to declare a "state of siege" on his own initiative. See Alivizatos, *Political Institutions*, 290–99.

59. Interview for the *New York Times*, 12 October 1973.
60. “Κάτω η χούντα του Πινοσέ! Ζήτω η αντίσταση του χιλιανού λαού! Απόφαση του Κ.Σ. του “Ρήγα Φεραίου” (1 October 1973) [Down with the Junta of Pinochet! Long Live the Resistance of the Chilean People! Decision of the C.C. of “Rigas Feraios”], *Thourios* n.s. 2 (November 1973): 63.
61. “PAK’s leader at the congress of the Socialist Youth of West Germany—JUSOS, 25/1/74, Munich,” Gogolou-Elefantis collection, PAK documents, box 5, file 4, ASKI.
62. Papazoglou, *Student Movement and Dictatorship*, 149. For a comparative analysis between the Greek and Spanish student movements under the Colonels and Franco see Kornetis, “Student Resistance to the Greek Military Dictatorship. Subjectivity, Memory, and Cultural Politics, 1967–1974.”
63. Heinze, “Ten Days in October,” 503. Also see Darling, “Student Protest in Thailand.” For the connection with the Greek student movement, see Kallivretakis, “‘Απόψε θα γίνει Ταϊλάνδη.’ Η ερμηνεία ενός “εξωτικού” συνθήματος της εξέγερσης του Πολυτεχνείου” [“Tonight There Will Be Thailand”: The Interpretation of an “Exotic” Slogan of the Polytechnic Revolt], *Tachydromos*, 13 November 2004.
64. See Varon, “Between Revolution 9 and Thesis 11.”
65. Iordanoglou, “Antidictatorship Student Movement.”
66. *Thessaloniki*, 2 November 1973.
67. *Thessaloniki*, 6 November 1973.
68. *Thessaloniki*, 14 November 1973.
69. For an analysis of how social movements are reinforced by crises in the world economy, see Burke, *Global Crises*.
70. Interview of Psaroudakis by K. Tsaousidis and Zafeiris, “The Talk of the Publisher of the ‘Christianiki,’ Nikolaos Psaroudakis, with the Subject ‘Education and Democracy,’ Has Been Cancelled,” *Thessaloniki*, 27 February 1972.
71. Clarke, et al., “Subcultures, Cultures, and Class,” 10.
72. Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 153.
73. Logothetis, “Occupation,” 209.
74. Interview, 2001, Audiovisual Archive, EDIA.
75. Passerini, “Le mouvement de 1968,” 39–74. Cohn-Bendit himself commented several years later, “In May ’68 we were in a certain way the engines of History, instead of suffering from it, we were making it.” *Nous l’avons tant aimée*, 66.
76. Dafermos, “My Decade,” 49.
77. Papas, “Juxtaposition of Opinions,” 246.
78. *The Real 17N*, television documentary.
79. *Thessaloniki*, 22 August 1973.
80. *I Synecheia* 5 (July 1973): 291.
81. *Thessaloniki*, 22 August 1973.
82. For an elaboration of this issue, see Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts*, 87.
83. Brewer, “Recollective Memory,” 24.
84. Portelli, *Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 15.
85. Van Boeschoten and Rosenthal argue, moreover, that when present public discourse is the prevailing component of a life story, it can indicate a particularly traumatized memory. See Van Boeschoten, *Troubled Years*, 220; Rosenthal, *Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte*, 90, 114.

86. Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 154.
87. Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder*, 60.
88. Interview with anonymous source quoted in Mantoglou, *Polytechnic*, 186.
89. Report of the Central Committee of KKE, quoted in Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 158.
90. The committee comprised six to seven A-EFEE members, two to three affiliates, one Rigas and one affiliate, a leftist, and a member of PAK.
91. Christos Lazos, *Thourios*, 15 November 1975.
92. See Papas, “Juxtaposition of Opinions,” 248.
93. Markezinis, *Reminiscences*, 415.
94. Kavvadias, *This Is Polytechnic Speaking*, 107, 88.
95. *Ibid.*, 90.
96. As McAdam notes, the “dramatization of system vulnerability,” that is, highlighting the supposed weakness of one’s political opponents, is one of the main factors that set framing efforts in motion, spurring on protest activity. McAdam, “Culture and Social Movements,” 41.
97. Chrisanthos Lazaridis, “Νοέμβρης ’78. Ξεχασμένες ιστορίες για ένα επίκαιρο παραμύθι” [Forgotten Stories About an Opportune Fairy Tale], *Agonas* 4 (1978): 29.
98. Passerini, “Il programma radiofonico,” 155.
99. *The Radio Station of the Polytechnic*, documentary by Lambros Papadimitrakis.
100. *Ibid.*
101. See Certeau, *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings*, 11. Also Roland Barthes famously compared the French university revolt’s “taking of speech” to the 1789 “taking of the Bastille.” See Barthes, “Writing the Event,” 150.
102. *Ibid.*, 161.
103. Mantoglou, *Polytechnic*, 187.
104. Felekis, interview by the author, January 2002. Also see Nikos Potamianos, “Η νύχτα του Πολυτεχνείου” [The Night of the Polytechnic], *Emfylios Typos* 59 (Apr. 2004).
105. Katsaros records that another slogan written by female anarchists rejected the universal dominance of the phallus. Katsaros, *I the Provocateur*, 219. In fact, Katsaros describes these female anarchists as “militant lesbians.”
106. Logothetis, “The Occupation.”
107. Quoted in anarchist newspaper *Allilengyi* 1 (15 November 1983).
108. The novelist Tachtsis recalls how shocked he was gazing at similar slogans while passing by the Polytechnic during the first day of the occupation. Tachtsis too thought initially that the whole thing may have been staged as part of a provocation. “Από τη χαμηλή προσωπική σκοπιά” [From the Low Personal Viewpoint], *I Lexi* 63–64 (Apr.–May 1987): 261.
109. Katsaros, *I the Provocateur*, 219.
110. A list of the most popular demonstrates the diversity in sloganeering during the Polytechnic days: “People show us solidarity,” “All people with us,” “Down with the Junta,” “People break the collar.” More radical ones were “Death to tyranny,” “People make a revolution,” and “Tonight it will be Thailand.” The classics “1–1–4” and “The only leader is the sovereign people” made their way in, as well as the already popular “Democracy,” “Freedom,” “Tonight Fascism is dying,” and

- “ESA-SS, torturers.” Others shouted “Free elections.” See *ibid.*, 191; Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 165. There were no “pure” student demands among the sloganeering.
111. See Kazakos, *Between State and Market*, 287–88.
 112. Marceau, *Le coup d’Athènes*, 5.
 113. Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 173.
 114. Papas, “Juxtaposition of Opinions,” 246.
 115. Hirschman, *Felicitá privata*, 104.
 116. Sommer, *La violence politique*, 37.
 117. Angelis and Dafermos, *Only a Dream*, 177.
 118. Vernikos, “Personal Testimony,” 155. Lawyer and activist Kanellakis writes similarly concerning the potential of periods that involve great risks: “Sometimes I wonder whether there is some kind of natural determinism, according to which danger is a precondition for joy and delight.” Kanellakis, “In Those Years,” 49.
 119. Varikas, “The Utopian Surplus,” 102.
 120. Kornetis, “Everything Links,” 37.
 121. Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 169.
 122. *Ibid.*, 162.
 123. Wasserstrom, *Student Protest*, 23.
 124. Katsaros, *I the Provocateur*, 226.
 125. Kavvadias, *This Is Polytechnic Speaking*, 56.
 126. *To Vima* quoted in Konofagos, *Polytechnic Uprising*, 51.
 127. Douka, *Fool’s Gold*. Here, I am using Roderick Beaton’s translation, 262–63.
 128. Wasserstrom, *Student Protest*, 23.
 129. Audiovisual Archive, EDIA.
 130. Douka, *Fool’s Gold*, 262–63. Original emphasis.
 131. Angelis and Dafermos, *Only a Dream*, 188.
 132. Lygeros, “The Conjuncture,” 204.
 133. Darveris, *Night’s Story*, 334. In her semifictional account, Douka describes scenes of policemen and soldiers who upon their entrance to the Polytechnic insulted the female students: “Whores, been enjoying yourselves have you, all that time in the whorehouse?” Douka, *Fool’s Gold*, 268.
 134. Chatzisokratis, “Coordinating Committee.”
 135. Douka, *Fool’s Gold*, 264. Even though I am using Beaton’s translation here, I chose to add some of the elements that he deliberately left out of the text for reasons of simplicity.
 136. Dafermos, *Students and Dictatorship*, 166.
 137. *Ibid.*, 168.
 138. Chatzisokratis, “Coordinating Committee,” 217.
 139. Here I am paraphrasing political scientist Robert Dahl’s axiom. See Dahl, *Polyarchy*, 15.
 140. Gagnon, “Life Accounts,” 54.
 141. Chatzisokratis, “Coordinating Committee,” 219.
 142. In *Two Years of Struggles*.
 143. Kotanidis, *All Together, Now!*, 429.
 144. Andrews, *Greece in the Dark*, 82.

145. See various testimonies in the Polytechnic trial as recorded by Karatzaferis in *Polytechnic Slaughter*.
146. “Καννελόπουλος, Μαύρος, Κ.Κ.Ε. και Ανδρέας Παπανδρέου συμπαρίστανται εις τους αναρχικούς” [Kanelloropoulos, Mavros, K.K.E. and Andreas Papandreou Show Solidarity with the Anarchists], *Eleftheros Kosmos*, 17 November 1973. His point strongly resembles Pier Paolo Pasolini’s controversial stance after the Valle Giulia “battle” in Rome of March 1968, when, after violent clashes between students and policemen, he sympathized with the latter for being the “real” proletarians. See Pasolini, “Il cerimoniale.”
147. Andrews, *Greece in the Dark*, 78.
148. Katsaros, *I the Provocateur*, 223.
149. Douka, *Fool’s Gold*, 263–64.
150. Douka, *Fool’s Gold*, 1979, 226. My translation.
151. See D. Iatropoulos, *This Is Polytechnic Speaking*, documentary.
152. Mazower, “Appropriation of Memory,” 224.
153. Panos Geramanis, “The Sensational Romiossini,” on the sleeve of Η Συγκλονιστική Ρωμοσύνη [The Sensational Romiossini], 1966, reissued 2004.
154. See Herzfeld, *Ours Once More*, 22–23.
155. Konofagos, *Polytechnic Uprising*, 32. In a conversation among protagonists of the movement a year after the restoration of democracy, it was stated that the flag was placed as a counterweight to anarchism. See the special issue by *Eleftherotypia*, 23–29 November 1977. Interestingly, Thai students also waved the country’s flag while protesting as a sign of loyalty to the nation and its symbols. See Heinze, “Ten Days in October,” 498.
156. Angelis and Dafermos, *Only a Dream*, 178.
157. *The Time Machine*, documentary.
158. Kotanidis, *All Together, Now!*, 431–32.
159. Kavvadias cites a progovernment testimony that he collected: “If it were during the first days the policemen would not have harmed the students, they would not have beaten up the kids, they had nothing against them. But so many days, they got enraged as well, they were human too, they were out of themselves, they didn’t know what to do. It was a sudden chaos!” *This Is Polytechnic Speaking*, 131–32.
160. Vassilis Papadias, industrial school student, in Karatzaferis, *Polytechnic Slaughter*, 239.
161. Portelli, “Intervistare il movimento,” 131.
162. Kotanidis, *All Together, Now!*, 432–33.
163. Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*, 21.
164. The testimony of Laliotis agrees. Quoted in Karatzaferis, *Polytechnic Slaughter*, 298. Darveris, himself a soldier at the time, also comments that most soldiers felt a deep rage for the students.
165. See Iordanoglou’s comprehensive account on Salonica’s movement in “Antidictatorship Student Movement,” 268.
166. *Ibid.*
167. See Άγνωστα Ντοκουμέντα του Πολυτεχνείου Θεσσαλονίκης [Unknown Documents of the Polytechnic of Salonica].
168. *Ibid.*, 270.

169. Kavvadias, *This Is Polytechnic Speaking*, 111.
170. Zafeiris, "Clandestine Correspondence," 28.
171. "We find ourselves inside the third bastion of New Free Greece. We're transmitting to you the fighting pulse of thousands of students of Salonica. At this moment we are proving the tradition that wants us always to be in the first line of the struggle for popular sovereignty. ... We demonstrate our opposition to the dictatorial regime that has repressed any sense of freedom, justice, and national sovereignty."
172. Iordanoglou, "Antidictatorship Student Movement," 272.
173. Kavvadias, *This is Polytechnic Speaking*, 112.
174. Quoted in Zafeiris, "Clandestine Correspondence," 28.
175. Iordanoglou, "Antidictatorship Student Movement."
176. *Protoporia*, December 1973.
177. "Αφησαν τα αυτοκινητα και εκαναν προλεταριάτο!" [They Left Their Cars and Made a Proletariat], *O Foittis*, 19 November 1973.
178. Marwick, *The Sixties*.
179. "Διαλύονται 28 φοιτητικοί σύλλογοι και οργανώσεις" [Twenty-eight Student Societies and Organizations Are Dissolved], *Eleftheros Kosmos*, 22 November 1973.
180. Poulantzas, *Crisis of the Dictatorships*, 94–95.
181. In his article "The Greek Lesson" (*New Statesman*, 14 December 1973), Christopher Hitchens classified the three internal divisions within the ranks of the Colonels as the "gangsters," the "Puritans," and the "Quadafis." The first, like Papadopoulos and Pattakos, were only really interested in power; the second, like Ioannidis and Colonel Ladas, were fanatical believers in martial virtue and social discipline; and the third were lower-rank officers who were for the independence of Greece above all.
182. Holtey, "Die Phantasie an die Macht," 171, 187f, 79, 269.
183. *Panspoudastiki* dubbed these students as the "300 provocateurs of Roufogalis," the notorious chief of the Secret Services.
184. Dr. Ioannis Fikiotis to John Spraos, Athens, 26 June 1974. Fikiotis requested in his letter that Spraos burn his recommendation "right after reading it." Universities (Placing Junta Refugees), Greek Committee against the Dictatorship Files, League for Democracy in Greece (Modern Greece Archive), King's College London.
185. K. Tzannetis to Spraos, n.d., *ibid*.
186. Spraos to Professor R. G. Hines, Department of Economics, Birkbeck College, London, 12 July 1974. *Ibid*.
187. O'Donnell and Schmitter, "Uncertain Democracies," 56.
188. Bermeo, "Power of the People," 10.
189. On the evolution of the left-wing youth during the *Metapolitefsi* see further Papadogiannis, "Greek Communist Youth."
190. Sociologist Maria Eliou argues, however, that the government of the day left out the social dimension, "which would form the foundation of a bold attempt at reform." See Eliou, "Those Whom Reform Forgot," 60.
191. Liakos, "History Writing," 50.
192. Kousouris, "Temps de la défaite," 219.
193. Fyssas, *Polytechnic Generation*, 19.
194. Van Boeschoten, *Troubled Years*, 215, 222.

195. Liakos, "History Writing," 50.
196. Darveris, *Night's Story*.
197. Zoumboulakis, "One Night to the Next."
198. Siani-Davies and Katsikas, "National Reconciliation after Civil War," 567.
199. Zoumboulakis, "One Night to the Next."
200. Fraser, 1968, 337.
201. See Alivizatos and Diamandouros, "Politics and the Judiciary and the Greek Transition to Democracy." Also see Graham and Quiroga, "After the Fear Was Over?"
202. On this issue see Haritos-Fatouros, "The Official Torturer" and T. Gibson and Haritos-Fatouros, "The Education of a Torturer."
203. See *The Trials of the Junta. Full Transcripts*.
204. Fyssas, *Polytechnic Generation*, 19.
205. Korovesis, *Guards of the Humans*, 17.
206. Also see Charisopoulou, *The Lost Generation of the Metapolitefsi*.
207. Maro Pantelidou-Malouta, "Για το φεμινισμό της κρίσης. Από τη διαφορά των φύλων στη(ν) (πολυκοίικλη) Γυναικεία υποκειμενικότητα" [For the Feminism of Crisis: From the Difference of the Sexes to the Polymorphous Subjectivity of Women], *Dini* 8 (1995–96): 101–19. Quoted in della Porta, Valiete, and Kousis, "Sisters of the South: Paths to Women's Rights in Southern Europe," unpublished paper, 21.
208. *Ibid.*, 22.
209. The total number of active members of the twenty most important women's organization in the late 1970s was estimated to range between 50,000 and 120,000—that is, 1.4 and 3.6 percent of the total female population. See Efi Kalliga, "Οργανωμένες Προσπάθειες Γυναικών" [Women's Organized Efforts], *Neoi Oρίζontes* 203–4 (1982): 49–52.
210. See Papadogiannis, "From Coherence to Fragments."
211. Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 49.

Epilogue

“Everything Links”

In April 1968, almost exactly one year after the Colonels' 1967 coup, the actress Melina Mercouri gave an interview to the English newspaper *The Observer*:

“I learn now of the shooting of Dutschke in Berlin and of Martin Luther King in America. I knew Martin Luther King, and I passed precious hours with him. I knew this boy who is lying gravely wounded in Berlin. I know what is happening in the world; the world is burning! ... I now have a feeling of what is happening in the world: I feel more for the Vietnamese or for the Negroes in America. I am less egocentric about Greece because everything is like that...” She joins her little fingers: “Everything links.”¹

This passage conveys to a large extent the “cultural and political mix” of the late 1960s and early 1970s: Melina Mercouri, a Greek exile, residing in Paris, speaks in London against the Greek Colonels, adding references to other movements and icons of the time, on the premises that one should not act in a myopic way, as “everything links.” Interestingly, Mercouri herself was part of the student folklore that she described. Her speech against the Greek Junta at Trafalgar Square the same year, in which she passionately recited Lord Byron and the Greek communist poet Ritsos while wearing a scarlet dress, became an iconic moment of the 1960s. She too became part of the international palette of revolutionary references.²

Constant riots on university campuses and worker unrest all around the globe are among the most emblematic images of 1968, all evoked in Mercouri's interview. New collective actors articulated a synchronized critique of both the capitalist and communist systems and voiced demands for more liberalization in their respective bloc. The Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, with its violent ending, and May 1968 in France are probably the most representative examples of these tendencies. At the same time, antiwar protests on American campuses as the Vietnam War reached its climax were accompanied by a growing sympathy for the escalating anti-imperialist struggles in Africa and Latin America.



Figure 6.1. Everything links. Antidictatorship rally in the United States in 1974, associating the Junta with the war in Vietnam. In the third-worldist frame of the “long 1960s,” Greece and Vietnam were grouped together as victims of US imperialism. (Source: ASKI, Archives of Social and Cultural History)

What commonalities are there to be found in the nature and demands of the protest movements of these heterogeneous countries? The first is that they brought social actors to the fore who challenged old theories and ideologies. These actors were often influenced by romantic utopias, which proved instrumental in shaping their imaginary. They attacked authoritarianism, be it of the state, university, or family, and voiced demands for greater freedom in the political, intellectual, and sexual realms. Many rejected both capitalism and the “bureaucratization” of revolution by the Soviet Union, and they sought to acquire autonomy from political organizations. Alternative ideologies linked to mass politics positioned a new, radicalized subjectivity against the one-dimensionality of technical and scientific rationalism. In Western countries, young people started favoring “antiproductivity” over an economy-driven market society and its values of discipline, hierarchy, and obedience; they expressed their opposition to repressive social norms. Preconceived social roles were also rejected despite the fact that most of the people involved in the movements—those Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude

Passeron call *les héritiers*—might have looked ahead to a more or less secure professional future.³ At the same time, they preferred sexual openness and promiscuity to monogamy and family microcosms.⁴

The year 1968 was not only Western and certainly not just European in nature. The global character of the revolts is therefore the major difference between '68 and the revolutions of 1848, to which they are often compared, or to the watershed events of 1989. The increased interaction in protest between various parts of the world was facilitated by a growing, globalized media communication infrastructure and a larger realignment of the Cold War world order. The cultural transfers that occurred in this period and the positive cross-identification between movements were also major factors for the creation of an osmosis.

The year 1968 also singles itself out by being a cultural as well as a political revolution. Much of the movements' iconoclasm derived from the fusion between the public and the private sphere. Art became part of everyday life. Within a growingly globalized culture industry, rock music became a powerful common reference through which people could communicate despite language barriers: Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, and Pink Floyd all contributed to the soundtrack of protest. Auteur cinema was another universal code and a means of "transmitting experiences." Street theater, music happenings, and subversive posters were massively diffused. A new "structure of feeling" was created whereby irony and collective imagination gave birth to irreverent posters, subversive poetry, and ironic writing on walls.⁵ According to Michael Loewy, artistic creation was informed by the "repertory of feast, play, poetry, 'liberation of speech,' while its language [was] inspired by Marx, Freud, Nietzsche and Surrealism."⁶ Such attributes were particularly evident in small artistic "vanguard groups" like the Situationists in France or the Provos in the Netherlands, which promoted *détournement* and subversion as central elements of their artistic explorations. Attire and external appearance were part of a new socialization too and acted as a code, a way of life, and a cultural identity statement. A spectacular fusion took place between "high" and "low" culture, sophisticated intellectual items and popular consumer products. This dialectic between playfulness and seriousness, *engagé* political action and everyday iconoclasm, illustrates the dichotomies between—but also the pastiche and hybrid character of—the various movements.

As historians Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth have pointed out, "discontent with the Cold War was what united activists on both sides of the Atlantic," a discontent manifested in their shared opposition to the deterrence policy, the common threat of nuclear extinction, and "a deep-seated frustration with the apathy of their societies."⁷ The Vietnam War was both

a point of reference and a source of inspiration for actors struggling against imperialism, and it became a connecting thread, cutting across the east, west, north, and south and eliminating continental differences. The New Left and neo-Marxism were also integral parts of the movements.⁸ Political activists exercised new repertoires of action, including occupations, sit-ins, street theater, civil disobedience, and communes. In these “new social movements,” students no longer had to wait for revolutionary conditions to mature but instead could create them themselves by accepting their role as revolutionaries.⁹ For traditional Marxist thinkers, this posed insurmountable difficulties, not least due to student revolutionaries’ not always harmonious coordination with workers. Revolutionary violence was yet another source of inspiration, and activists often adopted the theories of Frantz Fanon, Carlos Marighella, and Ernesto Che Guevara uncritically, transplanting the spirit of decolonization and “third-worldism” in often entirely irrelevant contexts.

The 1968 movements were also the product of the crisis in parliamentarianism, the expansion of universities, and the subsequent inability of states to accommodate rising student numbers. Growth of student populations, in turn, was in part the result of the postwar baby boom; the generational surplus produced a deep clash.¹⁰ Age-group issues tended to be more crucial than conflicts of class, race, or political interests. In Western countries, affluent society and Americanization faced a new critique as a “postmaterialist” culture of protest with anticonsumerist undertones took center stage.

From a transnational perspective, 1968 was the first global protest movement. In the bipolar world of the Cold War era, surpassing borders and achieving synchronicity was not an easy task, and despite the cultural transfer, national particularities and political specificities determined the nature and outcome of the movements. Accordingly, while ’68 became a fundamental moment in history in which national identities collided with and became subsumed by international ones, it was far from a homogeneous experience. While the movement in France was an antiauthoritarian revolt with strong anarchist undercurrents driven by activists in search of a new *Weltanschauung*, the New Left in Italy, primed by workerism, fought to abolish the “bourgeois state,” often by violent means and as a response to “state-sponsored aggression.” In West Germany, the radical movement was characterized by antimaterialism and a generational caesura, as young people asked emphatically, “What did you do during the war, Daddy?” expressing their disgust for the *Kriegsgeneration*. In the United States, the Berkeley free speech movement had given rise to a new generation of politicized anti-Vietnam youth who were mesmerized by the intransigence of the Black Power movement and eventually by the hippie counterculture as well. The difference between protest in Western democracies and in Southern and Eastern European and

Latin American countries under authoritarian regimes was stark. In the latter cases, “students fought for elementary civil rights, already possessed by their Western ... counterparts.”¹¹

It was necessary for the movements to communicate with one another through alternative channels and subterranean networks. Radical intellectuals started to be mutually influential for the first time: cultural transfer and projections started flowing from Latin America or Africa to Europe and the other way around. Students were convinced, according to Luisa Passerini, of the “relationship between the small, the local and the individual on one hand and the planetary level of oppression on the other.”¹² Still, specific cultural logics and distinct social and political circumstances acted as filters. Commonalities between movements and the cross-national diffusion of movement ideas often consisted merely of decontextualized fragments that were filtered through specific cultural traditions.¹³ Accordingly, even though the influence of the three Ms or the adoration of Che Guevara were attributed to a common cognitive orientation, the “uniformization” of the message did not necessarily imply a uniform reception of it. To paraphrase Stuart Hall, this is “the point where *already coded* signs intersect[ed] with the deep semantic codes of a culture and t[ook] on additional, more active ideological dimensions”.¹⁴ These were accordingly translated to a local “map of meaning,” a “map of social reality” with a whole range of social meanings, practices and usages “written in” to it.¹⁵

Even though in pure temporal terms the events of 1968 were not synchronic all over the globe, the year has come to designate a series of movements with a similar ethos that occurred from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. Accordingly, the Caputxinada in Barcelona in 1966 was dubbed an “early” ’68, the Polytechnic uprising in Athens in 1973 was called a “late” one, and the 1960s in the States were divided into “low,” “middle,” and “high” subcategories. Arthur Marwick’s already mentioned term the “long 1960s,” designating an era starting in the late 1950s and stretching until the mid-1970s, is therefore useful when trying to reconcile these different dates, as well as their antecedents and aftermaths.

In this context, the Greek student movement under the Colonels was one of the last manifestations of the political and countercultural dynamism of the “global 1960s.” Dimitris Papanikolaou argues that the Greek case under the dictatorship fits neatly into the general periodization, proposed among others by Fredric Jameson, which places the high 1960s in-between 1967 and 1974: a period of late capitalism characterized by a parallel hardening of global authoritarianism (coup d’etats, military interventions) and antiauthoritarianism (social movements, rise of counterculture).¹⁶ The Greek transition to democracy fits well with yet another model, Samuel Huntington’s

famous “third wave of democratization,” alongside Portugal and Spain in the mid-1970s—even though the student movements’ strong anti-Americanism seriously undermines Huntington’s conviction that social actors were supposedly “inspired and borrowed from the American example” of democratic pluralism.¹⁷

But is it correct to argue that the Polytechnic was a “Greek” or “belated” ’68—or as some French scholars put it, part of what constitutes “les années 68”?¹⁸ As social psychologist Nicole Janigro argues about the Yugoslav experience under Tito, the absence of democracy in Greece also made an institutional crisis of political parties and mechanisms of representation and a Dutschkean “long march through the institutions” impossible. What is more, Janigro’s point that “the system was more rigid and inclined for a more brutal rendering of accounts with its adversaries” could well be an accurate description of the Greek situation.¹⁹ On the other hand, mimicry, appropriation, and inversion of international models and transnational diffusion of protest culture played a major role in the making of the student movement and the shaping of new cultural identities.

To narrow my focus on this subject, I shall examine three temporal sequences, as Luisa Passerini suggests, in an almost Braudelian fashion: the relatively brief time span of the events, the medium-length period of the social movements, and the still lengthier period of cultural changes.²⁰

Events

Structurally, the antitechnocratic objectives that for Alain Touraine were crucial to the French May ’68 and Bourdieu’s description of those events as a sign of crisis in social reproduction cannot be easily applied to Greece.²¹ This was not a new social movement being bred by the postindustrial era, nor a movement having “broken with the traditional values of capitalist society and seeking a different relationship to nature, to one’s own body, to the opposite sex, to work and to consumption.”²² In addition, Greek economic conditions were different from those in France, Italy, or West Germany, as was the country’s post–World War II development, which elsewhere was the root of subsequent social agitation. Robert Inglehart’s influential thesis that the 1968 movements were the product of a postmaterialist culture of protest²³ does not apply to the Greek student movement, as the Greek “consumer culture” was new but not strong enough to spark an antimaterialist youth frenzy.

Moreover, the fact that Western countries were experiencing a crisis of parliamentarism at the same time that Greece had been put in a “plaster cast”

renders a direct comparison difficult. The Greek Communist Party had been outlawed since 1947, and the country's democracy was weak and "guided" even during the mid-1960s. Years after the end of the civil war, many people were still fighting for individual freedom and basic political rights. Therefore, Western students' slogans, such as *imagination au pouvoir*, often seemed out of place for Greeks, both inside and outside Greece. Being confronted with an arbitrary, brutal, and grotesque adversary such as the Junta, the students could not easily grasp protest activity of a bohemian or situationist character; this is partly the reason why the few anarchists inside the Law School and Polytechnic occupations were marginalized and suspected. Stavros Lygeros underscores that the distinct conditions in Greece led to different demands: "It has a specificity because it finds itself in an extraordinary situation, a dictatorship, it puts forward a demand that lies further back, it does not say 'All power to the imagination,' as May '68 does, it says 'Down with the Junta.' During the first phase it does not say it directly, because it wants to override fear, it says, for example, 'Free student elections'" (Lygeros, interview).

Just like the students of 1968, Greek students of the Polytechnic were the first generation to grow up under "less burdensome economic conditions and therefore were less subject psychologically to the disciplinary compulsion of the labour market" and "more sensitive towards the economization of life and individual costs of competitive society," to quote Bert Klander-mans.²⁴ They dissociated themselves from the traditionalist home model and traditional social formations but not from the political ones. Furthermore, as in other underdeveloped countries, the students in Greece served as a catalyst for political change. Contrary to the experience of Western students, who had "no experience of political terror, economic crises [and] real political alternatives to the established order,"²⁵ they had considerable familiarity with these phenomena. In Greece, just like in Spain, the conflicts were more acute and conspicuous, reflecting the particular cleavages of a divided nation. Furthermore, a lot more was at stake and there was much more personal risk involved in protest in Greece than in France, Italy, or West Germany. These were democracies, albeit with a strong conservative state, while Greece was a repressive and authoritarian military regime. The fact that torture was an ongoing fact for the ones who were arrested during the dictatorship is a major differentiating factor that needs to be emphasized.

The 1973 Polytechnic occupation resembled 1968 insofar as the spirit of uprising inspired its emergence. Compared to other movements of the 1960s, however, neither the Polytechnic itself nor the Greek student movement as a whole was as messy or as unresolved. Accordingly, the controversial wisecrack that '68 was "an interpretation in search of an event" cannot be easily applied to the student movement in Greece. The primary ideology of

'68 was "contestation" with content, objectives, and enemies that were not always precise; in Greece meanwhile the huge weight of the military dictatorship and the special significance that acts of defiance such as the Polytechnic occupation acquired within this context unconditionally rendered it an event with clear interpretational cues. A rebellion against a dictatorship must be understood to be much more forthright than middle-class radicalism with the often ambivalent motivations of the Western movements of the late 1960s, which aimed to change society in general. As Catalan sociologist Salvador Giner has put it, regarding the Spanish case, antidictatorship students in the European South fought for "classical" liberal goals, such as free unions, a modern educational system, and the free circulation of ideas; radicals in Berkeley, Paris, Berlin, or Amsterdam rebelled precisely against this kind of liberalism.²⁶

Though the self-organized structure of Greek students prior to 1973 shared similarities with the '68 ethos, the Polytechnic occupation broke the direct democracy precedent, introducing the principle of representative democracy in its extreme form. Nonmembers of the CCO, for instance, could not enter the room where the committee held its assemblies. Another interesting feature is the role played by the media. Students' pirate radio station in Athens was a very direct way of spreading influence and accessing a wider range of people. Konstantinos Konofagos, the former rector of Athens Polytechnic, argues correctly that the students in Paris in 1968 did not manage to find such a form of propaganda,²⁷ most likely because they did not want to. The Greek students did not employ radical tactics, however. Contrary to the 1968 movements, which relied heavily on the use of confrontational events, the Greek movement's repertoire was strictly nonviolent, although perhaps equally as disruptive, as the Law School and Polytechnic occupations proved to be.

Still, a semiotic study of the 1968 protest movements reveals a similarity to the anti-Junta student movement in terms of cultural significations (gestures, language, symbols) that formed their identity code: these cultural significations became a menace to the established order and incomprehensible to outsiders.²⁸ Elements of '68 were present at the Polytechnic, even if in disguise, including a common theoretical background, patterns of behavior, and the participants' placing of themselves in an imaginary chain of events in a global contestatory movement. What is more, the Greek student movement reacted against the pressure of a military dictatorship but was also strongly exposed to the general protest wave generated in 1968. Vourekas remarks: "In the discussions about political matters and so forth, May '68 was not absent, not at all. On the contrary, it seemed very close. Now think, the [Greek] student movement starts acquiring momentum in '72, there is

a four-year time lag, it is not much” (Vourekas, interview). The temporal proximity between 1968 and 1972 that is mentioned here underlines the idea of the “long ’68,” once again relativizing the supposed synchronicity of the 1968 protest movements.

The political conscience of the student movement was also shaped by a set of cultural models and prototypes of resistance that originated abroad. “Foreign” models were quite subversive, as they included elements of defiance and linked the student movements’ imaginary, experiences, and style together. This fits with Doug McAdam’s observation that “the rash of student movements that flourished around the globe ... in 1968 were clearly attuned to and influenced by one another, resulting in the development and diffusion of a ‘student left master frame.’”²⁹ In contrast to the previous generation, the Polytechnic generation had experienced and learned from ’68 as a past model, not a simultaneous event. Greek students had ’68, and in particular the French experience, in the back of their minds. Solidarity, imagination, vitality, subversiveness, and hedonism were standard themes.

The distinct characteristics and ultimate demands of the Greek movement—a locally defined case—were determined not only by internal politics but also by a broader influx of information and semantic codes, such as dress, taste in music and literature, rhetoric and slogans, and the awareness that there were parallel student movements operating abroad. In this way, student mentalities, marked by both their domestic situation and an adversary as concrete as a military Junta, were nevertheless enhanced by an awareness of student movements elsewhere. This point evokes German historian Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey’s comment on ’68, that it was “the mimesis of all possible revolutions that united the students who were in revolt.”³⁰ Greek students managed to accumulate many elements of the international protest movement alongside their distinct characteristics and despite structural incongruence. The general wave of ’68 infiltrated Greece but it was “translated,” “edited,” and grafted according to the country’s existing standards, conditions, and needs.³¹

In both the ’68 and post-’68 movements, the revolutionary imagination was shaped by foreign experiences, including the international circulation of information about the student revolts and the strong influence of the liberation struggles in the Third World. Cross-national diffusion of protest led to the adoption of similar strategies concerning organization, action forms, and ideological frames.³² In that sense, the fallout from ’68 had a quasi-colonial cultural impact as “transmitter” countries influenced the politics of “receiver” nations, and this continued after the fall of the dictatorship through the work of a series of French-trained Greek scholars, some of whom arrived from Vincennes. Still, one could argue that a mutual influence took place.

The *tiersmondiste* tendency of Western students included positive identification with the Greek “underdog,” and the campaigns that took place abroad against the Colonels’ regime had rendered Mikis Theodorakis, Alekos Panagoulis, and Melina Mercouri parts of the pantheon of revolutionary folklore. This shifted the rules of the power game as well as the receiver and transmitter dynamics that had been linear and one-sided hitherto.³³ Here, I am not only arguing about a certain cross-fertilization and confluence between the different movements, but also about a destabilization of the symbolic geographies of transnationalism and their supposed asymmetric flow from the “center” to the “periphery.”

Antiregime Greek students also shared the utopian vision of the ’68 movements. Greek students could be described as visionary protesters, but with widely differing views on how to combat the regime and transform Greek society. None of them wanted to go back to the pre-1967 state of affairs. They did not, however, believe in aphorisms, such as the famous Italian dictum, “The bourgeois state should be smashed instead of changed.” But the Junta’s grip was not a static and impenetrable barrier; it proved to be surprisingly dynamic and porous, instead. It was a prism of sorts, which often privileged distortions instead of a clear viewpoint. The violence in the rhetoric and actions of Western protesters, for example, was translated into the peacefulness of the Polytechnic occupation, while consumption—rejected by the rebelling youth of the West—remained an ardent desire.

Finally, Greek students’ public demonstrations were more serious and less irreverent and provocative than those organized by their Western counterparts, largely because they targeted the whole nation. Accordingly, although the Greek ’73 was by definition antiauthoritarian, as it dealt with an authoritarian regime, it did not aspire to throw off authority altogether. While Greek students wanted to change things, alienated as they were both by the dictatorship and by the passivity of wider Greek society, they did not appear willing to be violently disruptive, perhaps because they did not have the conceptual and physical space to do so. Instead, they sought to create a national insurrection by appealing to ordinary people. Dimitris Hatzisokratis, for instance, stresses with pride that the greatest achievement of the Polytechnic was that it managed to isolate leftist radicalism and promote slogans that could be accepted and digested by most Greeks.³⁴ This was not a concern of ’68 protesters, who could allow themselves to be as radical, libertarian, and anarchic as they wished.

An interesting testimony is provided by Rector Konstantinos Konofagos in a book published some years after the democratic transition in Greece. Since he had been to Paris shortly after May 1968, Konofagos had a first-hand opinion of what had happened during the *événements* and was in a po-

sition to compare this with the Greek case: “I compared the slogans of Paris with the ones in Athens. Much less humor in our people. But all the rest was equally multifarious. The anarchist slogans over here were fewer too.”³⁵ So even if playfulness and hedonism were present in the Greek movement, they occurred on a strictly *private* level. As Claudie Weill has argued, there is a great difference between a joyous culture of revolt and a serious one,³⁶ and the French and Greek cases reflect this discrepancy. The strict guidance of Greek antiauthoritarian organizations, as well as their patrolling for “provocateurs” and out-of-line slogans at the Polytechnic, betray the seriousness that accompanied the Greek movement from the very beginning. All this differentiates it from the festivity and the *détournement* that, say, situationists expected from a social movement.³⁷ In Greece, by contrast, part of the repertoire of dissidence was acting with earnestness.

Medium-Length: Utopias and Outcomes

According to Italian political sociologist Giovanni Statera, there is a lag between utopia and ideology and an instantaneous conflict between the two in a social movement.³⁸ At some point in the 1968 movements, ideology superseded utopia, and the student movements “succumbed to reality as it was.”³⁹ In the Greek case, it seems that the two were inextricably linked, and in all but a few cases ideology held paramount importance. Only in the Polytechnic uprising did the utopian feeling acquire a status of its own, aided by the circumstances. At that point, one could argue, paraphrasing Gareth Stedman Jones, that the Greek student movement became both “expressive” and “structural.”⁴⁰ The spontaneous character of the revolt, the feeling that everything was possible and the momentary void, allowed for the creation of mini-utopias that were quickly dissolved when the movement was crushed under the tanks.

Romantic utopianism, based on the ambivalence between radical humanism and cold structuralism, was a common experience in '68 movements.⁴¹ These movements began with a short period of complete freedom of imagination. The students' desires, their beliefs, and their rational expectations became temporarily intertwined, and the movement was not filtered through the prerogatives of ideology alone. The semantic content of their intentions and actions was dictated by the very rational preconditions set by the struggle, a fact that curtailed the space of the imagination, as the movement required cold and lucid thinking. On the other hand, ideological aspects were omnipresent: the frame that judged the conditions to be a “revolutionary situation” made people act in a specific way, proving its

performative effect. Frames acquired a real basis, following André Breton’s famous dictum that “*L’imaginaire est ce qui tend à devenir réel*” (the imaginary is that which tends to become real).⁴²

Another defining factor was Greek political culture, which in many ways determined the claims that the Greek students did and did not make. This, to borrow the words of Lynn Hunt and Keith Barker, “ultimately provide[d] the logic of revolutionary action” by supplying most of the “discourses, values and implicit rules that express[ed] and shape[ed] collective action and intentions.”⁴³ In terms of left-wing politics, even though the Greek students split into groupings, their attachment to communist orthodoxy remained intact. Though the Greek Communist Party itself condemned the 1968 uprisings as an opportunistic circus, the students were nonetheless very much attracted to the party. Their allegiance to basic communist principles, and even more so to the two communist parties as exponents of the only legitimate and authoritative alternative to Greek authoritarianism, remained unchallenged. To many young Greeks, nurtured as they were by the teachings of the traditional Greek Left, it was quite puzzling that communist parties tended to be excluded from and contested by the 1968 movements.

Although they shared the radicalism and flamboyance of their communist counterparts in rhetoric and action, Greek leftists did not aim at the “immediate mobilization of many individuals for the sake of mobilization itself,” to use Habermas’s phrase.⁴⁴ Maoists and Trotskyists were immersed in new actionism inspired by Mao and Castro and therefore sought mobilization at all costs, but not for its own sake. Moreover, although these people were, next to the anarchists, the closest in Greece to 1968 radicalism and internationalism, they were often the ones who rejected references to the international situation, opting for a more rigid focus on the Greek case and its special characteristics. A discrepancy, which partly derives from the above, is that while a certain neoanarchist tendency was born in the ’68 movements, the word *anarchy* continued to bear negative connotations in Greece, not only for the ruling classes and the Junta but also for most sections of the Left, including the radicals.

The Greek student movement did not, in Andrew Feenberg and Jim Freedman’s terms, lead to a change in the focus of opposition “from economic exploitation to social and cultural alienation,” nor did it “prepare the rejection of Stalinist authoritarianism in the new social movements.”⁴⁵ Greek students did it their own way, by incorporating the Communist Party and retro-Marxist Old Left as a leading player in contestatory action.⁴⁶ Given that “traditional values and forms of behaviour limit the actors’ views on what is possible,”⁴⁷ the hegemonic communist ideology did not allow for major breakthroughs, given the imprinted traumatic memory of the civil

war. The students' colorful cultural activism indirectly expressed "the demand for a different political rhetoric," which, however, did not "put in doubt ... the dominant left-wing ideology and practice," as writer Aris Marangopoulos maintains.⁴⁸

The year 1968 was a revolt against bourgeois society, a revolt that felt the need to represent the working class and act in its name. The uprising in Greece was against a tangible oppression, and it happened to share some of 1968's tenets and points of departure: a general Marxist background that venerated the working classes and workers; the conviction that the ruling class in Greece was backing the dictators (as did the Right, the Church, and the Americans); and a rejection of Greek society's bigotry. The absence of a trade-unionist worker movement in Greece is striking,⁴⁹ in contrast, for example, to Francoist Spain, where the worker's movement under the communist-led Comisiones Obreras was becoming increasingly powerful, at about the same time. Despite all this, however, the so-called student-worker unity was a typical frame that antiregime actors used in Greece. The students' action repertoire was strongly influenced by their tendency to think of themselves as linked to the workers, even if there was a chasm between the two groups.

May 1968 also posed the problem of defining the subjects of history. This shift had an impact on Greek students too. Alkis Rigos stresses that they also believed in their capacity to change the world: "A thing into which we didn't fall as a generation was the mythology that the Great Powers do everything and therefore you are weak. Somewhere out there some foreigners decide, and you are weak. We believed that you could change the world" (Rigos, interview). This belief in the power of student agency over and against the official power structures was novel and quite unprecedented.

The Polytechnic can also be seen as a moment of collective madness, in which traditional barriers are broken and the perception of activists that they can intervene in history is changed.⁵⁰ The student activists of the Polytechnic shared the perception that they could change the world with other '68 movement actors, producing a type of account that explains how activists perceived the world order. Vernikos opts for a more limited version of this in the title of his book: *Once Upon a Time, When We Wanted to Change Greece*. It is significant that it is Greece, not the world, that is to be changed, and this lexical cautiousness, juxtaposed with the hyperbole of the Western (The Doors-inspired) slogan "We want the world, and we want it now" accurately encapsulates the Greek students' awareness of the limitations that they faced in contrast to some of their counterparts abroad. Even so, their conviction that they could change Greece, coupled with their certainty that they were part of a wider universal struggle, was enough to place them within the

broader context of avant-garde protest. Michalis Sabatakakis describes it as a conviction that capitalism was in retreat at a global level:

I believe that the main characteristic experienced by the young people in Europe and the young people in Greece was a feeling that capitalism was being replaced. Namely, this was the period of Vietnam, of movements of liberation in the whole world, Che Guevara, Chile. This is therefore a period in which the feeling was that capitalism was retreating, being replaced by a revolutionary movement. (Sabatakakis, interview)

Despite all those particularities and contradictions, the antidictatorship student movement shared many elements with the antihierarchical and anti-authoritarian character of the 1968 revolts and can fairly be considered a “revolt” (Touraine), a “quasi-revolution” (Morin), and a “cultural break” (Crozier).⁵¹ But in Greece, part of the establishment backed the student struggle, including the “old” politicians and intellectuals and also those people who belonged to the old bourgeoisie and could not abide the coarseness of the dictators and their obscurantism. And they did so in part because the movement, despite its dynamism—and contrary to Sabatakakis’s conclusion regarding the crisis of capitalism—was not a “tear-it-all-apart” fight but one that vindicated traditional values and thus was not intrinsically provocative. Even during the trial for the Polytechnic massacre that took place in 1975, a year after the Junta’s fall, students refused to admit several facts, probably in order to avoid giving their opponents the right to argue that they wanted to stage an anarchist revolution.⁵² They were “good kids,” venerated by many people, because they shared healthy—if communist—attitudes. For some, they were “good kids” precisely because of their communist leanings. This was surely not the way they saw it; it was, after all, radical to be both middle-class and communist under a dictatorship. In the end, however, they were iconoclastic mostly in terms of everyday life: looser sexual mores, hippie appearance, declared political beliefs.

Future’s Past: Cultural Changes

In the words of Carl E. Schorske, student revolts tends to pass over time from politics to culture due to “a gap that open[s] between generations in both moral and intellectual culture” that is “wider than in politics.”⁵³ Cultural projections play a catalyst role as they remodel the imaginary and historical conscience of a generation.⁵⁴ Greek students mixed the high and low

registers of culture, the “elite” and “popular” ones, as they appropriated both. They matched the characteristics of a countercultural movement of defiance with highly sophisticated book reading, and they immersed themselves in alternative cultural forms not only as producers/consumers of artifacts but also through their lived practices. In the end, ideology—supposedly the main characteristic of the time—went hand-in-hand with a deeper form of culture that was emerging, distinguishing this generation from any previous one. This was precisely what provided the movement with a strong sense of unity, despite the deep divisions among the students. It was a syncretic form of culture that had accumulated the international paradigm of youth radicalism as the *Zeitgeist* of the era and translated it into something new through the filter of Greek cultural tradition.⁵⁵

The general antiauthoritarianism directed against all institutions (school, family, party, politics), which was closer to the original spirit of '68 than to Marxism,⁵⁶ was more implicit than explicit in the Greek case, however. Similarly, there was a striking absence of feminist, ecological, or homosexual components in the movement and its successors after the restoration of democracy. Overall, Greek students lay between innovation and tradition, a dualism reflected in their reluctance to attack the way in which power was being exercised in society at large. Still, in Greece, the uneven development of the student movement “exacerbated the experience of modernity as contradiction and crisis,” as cultural historians Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi argue regarding the Spanish case, producing a more characteristic avant-garde than in the “more advanced capitalist nations where modernity was less problematic.”⁵⁷

This generation of Greek students was an avant-garde in terms of both its self-perception and its action repertoire. It accelerated the cultural modernization processes that took place at breakneck speed in the years following the Junta's collapse by linking political radicalism with everyday life practices. In this way, the student movement acted as incubator of new ideas and future behaviors, carving out new boundaries between the public and the private,⁵⁸ thus expanding the horizon of its possibilities. After all, student circles were privileged: they were the only site where alternative culture and politics were discussed, experimented with, and put into practice.

Overall, their relation to modernization, 1968, democracy, communism, and Europe were crucial in forging Greek students into a new elite that would accelerate and legitimize the transitional process. Finally, people belonging to this generation of activists acquired agency and drew important political lessons from their antidictatorship experience,⁵⁹ which they later employed in order to bring about social change and a new political culture in Greece, including a different *lingo politico* and a new cultural ethos. Moreover, they



Figure 6.2. A powerful *lieu de memoire*. Thousands of young people demonstrating within the Polytechnic yard one year later, November 1974. The democratic transition was already underway, and the Polytechnic acted as a legitimizing event of the entire process. (Photographer: Aristotelis Sarrikostas)

launched a culture of dissent that operated as a system of checks and balances for postauthoritarian politics throughout the transitional process.

Last, but not least, the Polytechnic was memorialized as the major act of resistance during the seven years of authoritarianism, thus serving as one of the founding myths of the post-1974 Greek Republic. If the standard way for a society to overcome a traumatic period is through the homogenization of collective memory,⁶⁰ in Greece this was done through the hagiography of student resistance and its epically bloody conclusion as a token of the Greek people’s resistance to authoritarianism. In many respects, the Polytechnic was used to whitewash the lack of systematic dissent against the dictatorial regime of the Colonels. The relative consensus that the Junta enjoyed among some segments of the Greek population during the six-plus-one years of its existence was obliterated in this celebration and followed by collective amnesia.

The current economic crisis, however, has generated a new trend: that of complete dismissal of both the entire period of the transition to democracy and of the Polytechnic generation in particular, blaming them for all later ills of Greek society.⁶¹ This threatens the very foundations on which postauthoritarian collective memory has been constructed. It remains to be seen

in what ways the contestation of this hitherto quintessential national *lieu de mémoire* is going to affect the country's political culture and self-image in the years to come.

Conclusion

This book has attempted to trace the reasons behind the upsurge in student activity in Greece during the Colonels' dictatorship, which culminated in the most important public act of resistance against the Junta: the Polytechnic uprising. The student movement—the only form of social upheaval that took place during the dictatorship—exploited a series of cultural and ideological elements to disrupt the consensus created over the course of five years of dictatorial rule. Expressing the views of those elements of civil society that felt an ever greater discontent as the years passed, students demanded radical changes and ultimately created new meaning. By exploring the subjective element in their discourse and the identity of the Polytechnic Generation, this study has considered not only how new collective identities shaped student mentalities but also the ways in which the latter have changed over time and how individuals look back at their past militancy.

By promoting a dialogue between private microhistory and public events, this book has also explored both the political side of the events of the Greek antidictatorship movement and the everyday experiences of people, following Norbert Elias's invitation "to challenge the conventional antinomy between the study of social structures and that of the emotional ones but, at the same time, research and consider them together, dialectically."⁶² By analyzing the discourse and action of some of the first antiregime student groupings, which exercised political violence with some restraint, I have further attempted to demonstrate the aspirations and imaginary resources of these students, but also their limited success.

Considering the student body from the early 1960s onward, I have traced the evolution of contentious politics in Greek university life over the "long 1960s," including the emergence of two distinct generational groups, and traced the continuities and ruptures in patterns and cultures of protest. Having already participated in the events of the first years of the 1960s, Generation Z was a force for change, even if it retained and reproduced many antiquated elements of old social life and aged militancy. However, the Lambrakides, despite their excellent organizational capacities, which included a wide infrastructure covering most of the country, proved unable to respond to the oncoming authoritarianism and did not manage to retain a structure for protest following the coup. With the political parties in disarray, these stu-

dents did not react to the dictatorship in an efficient way, and they lost a great part of their rank and file to immediate detention. In general, Generation Z was conditioned by the past: it did not adapt to the new conditions created by the Junta, nor did it organize popular and successful forms of struggle, having already exhausted its creativity in previous years. All in all, the daring underground ventures of this generation proved unsuccessful.

The groupings that originated abroad often theorized the importance of the use of violence, bearing the clear marks of the third-worldist discourse of the time. For those in Greece, and as the '68 uprisings turned into a generational symbol, their counterparts abroad acquired a legendary status. This came into contrast with the opinions of many Greek émigrés, however, who regarded '68 as bizarre and even grotesque. Often, the seriousness with which Greek “revolutionaries” in France and Italy approached dissent made them suspicious of mass protest, as they expected armed struggle rather than peaceful marches.

Moving on to the 1970s, and with Generation Z out of the way, new collective identities were shaped by the very *experience* of the dictatorship, which in turn further politicized the members of the new generation, often in conflict with their class or ideological backgrounds. That these youths were not the ideological, cultural, or political clones of the civil war and post-civil war periods, as were various generations before them, including the Lambrakides, partly explains why the Junta did not succeed in either classifying or integrating them. New individual and collective behaviors, bred by a set of subversive everyday practices, greatly influenced the course of events. As in most dictatorial regimes, the private spaces that were preserved proved more significant than bombs set off, since they served as the necessary springboard for an initial “silent revolution” that would ultimately lead to a direct clash with the regime.

Furthermore, the regime’s gradual liberalization offered the necessary political opportunities for the reinforcement of the mobilizing structures of this new generation. Collective platforms such as EKIN and the regional societies became points of reference and incubators of change, helping the dissident segments of the student body to acquire the coherence they were lacking. Resistance was oriented toward violent action in the years of the regime’s harsher repression, persecution, and censorship; however, in the years following 1971 the first massive initiatives of the student body occurred. Students confronted the regime by using a legal platform to discuss university issues; at the same time, they transformed their everyday realities by drawing on cultural elements charged with symbolic meaning.

The preceding chapters further traced the forms of cultural warfare developed by Greek students, which bore its own stigma and was marked by

a reappropriation of tradition against the regime's own conceptualization and promotion of Hellenic-Christian civilization in a succinct and subversive way. There was a renewal, enabled by the softening of censorship and provided by new readings, symbols, foreign prototypes of protest, and confidence that a break from the past was possible. A syncretic culture made out of music, literature, common political readings, cinema, theater, and style fostered student unity and recognition and served to counter threatening ideological rifts. These elements provided the means for the students' micro-resistances in everyday life, which eventually bred a full-fledged confrontation with the regime.

In addition, given the tough conditions, dissident male students started regarding their female companions as equals for the first time. This attitude was connected to the increased numbers of females in Greek universities, to the structural needs of the movement, and to a growing sexual emancipation and consciousness of parity. Even so, the battle of the sexes and gender prejudice remained a major issue in the Greek student movement, especially as they pertained to movement leadership, and despite the presence of a significant number of charismatic female leaders.

This book did not approach the Greek student movement only from within the scope of internal politics but also in the context of an ongoing radicalization of youth culture internationally. I have suggested that the Polytechnic Generation was an avant-garde in Greek society in general, and to a certain extent accelerated Greece's modernization, which took place at breakneck speed in the years following the Junta's collapse when a political radicalism merged with everyday life. However, the Polytechnic Generation was not as subversive and rejectionist, rebellious and contestatory as were its counterparts in other countries. The epic poetics of its politics were dictated by the romanticized communist past and conditioned by the overtly repressive context. The bloody conclusion of the Polytechnic underlines its resemblance to the experiences of Czechoslovakia, Mexico, Thailand, and Chile. In addition, despite the political rationalism and the general pragmatism that characterized the leadership of the mainstream student groups that seemed to be fighting for "classical" liberal goals, there was an underlying utopian frame regarding the radical transformation of the political environment. This was utterly frustrated by the experience of the *Metapolitefsi*, which students active in the movement often recall as a particularly traumatic moment.

With '68, a mimetic tendency was diffused among the students in an attempt to reenact the international protest movements. The influence of foreign and home-grown counterculture, facilitated by the opening of the regime, led to greater political and personal emancipation. The particular student culture that developed was marked not only by Greek internal politics

but also by a strong international current of radical youth culture. Changes appeared in aesthetics and intellectual currents, as well as in the norms of social behavior. In addition, a mass consumerist youth culture *in statu nascendi* was coupled with political engagement, thus bringing the children of Marx and the dictatorship closer to the “Marx and Coca-Cola” model, even though protagonists reject this label with fury.

In terms of memory and subjectivity, former militant life stories are characterized by a certain homogenization by age group. While Generation Z stresses the continuity in suffering, the Polytechnic Generation presents itself as signaling a total rupture with the past. As far as the rivalry between the different components of the mass movement is concerned, I have revealed the “hardening” of subjectivity as ex-militants continue to use the analytical categories and to echo the ideological divisions of the past, such as the age-old ambivalence between strategy and spontaneity. Others, however, present a rather idealized image of student collaboration during the Junta years as an outcome of having a common goal, the overthrow of the regime. Rather than passing judgment, the book shares Ronald Fraser’s conclusion that “what people thought, or what they th[ink] that they thought, also constitutes a historical fact.” Even though I cannot know exactly what happened, the people I interviewed gave me “their truth,” which is extremely valuable.⁶³

It is not a given that the student movement in Greece took place because of the dictatorship or that without it the students would not have been radicalized as students were in much of the rest of the world. To paraphrase Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi’s conclusion about Franco’s Spain, judging by what happened in France, Germany, and Italy, there would probably have been student troubles with or without the Colonels.⁶⁴ The student movement that developed in Greece in the early 1970s not only constituted a reaction against the pressure of a military dictatorship but was also widely determined by the general wave generated in 1968. But it was the Junta itself that provided the complex framework for the specific evolution and climax of the Greek “long 1960s.”

It was the response of the authoritarian regime that deepened the crisis and reinforced the students’ combativeness and coherence. The conviction that this was a battle of life and death was further reinforced by the anger at the 1973 coup d’état against Allende in Chile and inspired by the contemporaneous student movement against the military dictatorship in Thailand—an identification that turned the movement “glocal.” But the students did not really topple the regime, despite the Polytechnic bloodbath in November 1973 and present-day convictions about the contrary; it was the coup d’état against Makarios in Cyprus and the eventuality of a Greek-Turkish military confrontation that did so. As Jean-Paul Sartre argued regarding May ’68 in

France, “A regime is not brought down by 100,000 unarmed students, no matter how courageous.”⁶⁵ This is even truer, if the regime in question is a military one that does not refrain from resorting to violence in order to assert its authority.

Nevertheless, it was the student movement, bearer of the international protest movement’s message of radicalism, which discredited the attempts of the regime to liberalize from within. The process of controlled liberalization failed miserably because, apart from helping to “educate” a new generation of students, its small concessions led to demands for still greater freedom of information, political pluralism, and democratization. This complex web of local and international references interpellated the students into specific social and political practices that became a major source of pressure on the Colonels’ regime, to some extent defining its course but also laying the foundations for a total reshaping of Greek political culture in the following decades.

Notes

Previous versions of this chapter have been published in Kornetis, “Everything Links” and Kornetis, “68: Année symbolique.”

1. John Gale, “Melina: What Those Colonels Told Me,” *Observer*, 14 April 1968.
2. See for example the picture of that event in Ali and Watkins, 1968. *Marching in the Streets*.
3. Bourdieu and Passeron, *Les Héritiers*.
4. Perry Anderson, “Renewals,” 7.
5. Michael Loewy, “The Revolutionary Romanticism of May 1968,” 97.
6. *Ibid.*, 98.
7. Klimke and Scharloth, “1968 in Europe.”
8. See, in this respect, John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds. *The New Left Revisited*.
9. Mausbauch, “Historicising 1968,” 183.
10. Flores and de Bernardi, *Il Sessantotto*, 91.
11. Jerzy Eisler, “March 1968 in Poland,” 250.
12. Passerini, “Utopia and Desire,” 25.
13. Della Porta, “1968,” 141.
14. Stuart Hall, “Encoding, Decoding,” 512–13. Original emphasis.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Papanikolaou, “Making Some Strange Gestures,” 196. See also *Singing Poets* and Jameson, “Periodizing the Sixties.”
17. Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 286. See Katsiaficas, *Asia’s Unknown Uprisings, Vol. 2*.
18. See, for instance, Potamianos, “Ο “Ελληνικός Μάης” [The “Greek May”], *Emfylios Typos* 59 (Apr. 2004).
19. Janigro, “Il “68 jugoslavo,” 78–79.
20. Passerini, “Utopia and Desire,” 12.

21. See the classics by Touraine, *Le communisme utopique* and Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*.
22. Klandermans, “New Social Movements,” 26.
23. Inglehart, *Silent Revolution*. While Habermas attributes “new social movements” to late modernity, Inglehart accounts for their appearance on the grounds of a postindustrial welfare and feeling of safety. The latter’s theory about postmaterialism ascribes the rise of new social movements to changed values.
24. Klandermans, *Ibid.*
25. Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society*, 25.
26. Giner, “Power, Freedom and Social Change in the Spanish University, 1939–1975,” 194.
27. Konofagos, *Polytechnic Uprising*, 51.
28. Sommer, *La violence politique*, 40.
29. McAdam, “Culture and Social Movements,” 42. See in this respect Caute, *Year of the Barricades*, and Katsiaficas, *Imagination of the New Left*.
30. Gilcher-Holtey, “Die Phantasie an die Macht,” 49.
31. I am grateful to Cornel Ban for drawing my attention to the importance of grafting in understanding how ideas travel. Also see Asimakoulas, “Translating ‘Self’ and ‘Others’.”
32. Della Porta, “1968,” 136–37.
33. *Ibid.*, 141.
34. Chatzisokratis, *Polytechnic ’73. Rethinking a reality*.
35. Konofagos, *Polytechnic Uprising*, 115.
36. Discussion in terms of the paper “Fête ou révolution? Les perceptions diverses de mai 68 par les étudiants grecs,” presented by the author within the framework of the Groupe d’études et de recherche sur les mouvements étudiants (GERME), Science Po, Paris, 17 December 2003.
37. See Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology*, 429.
38. Statera, *Death of a Utopia*.
39. Passerini, “Utopia and Desire.”
40. Stedman Jones, “Significance of Student Uprisings,” 33.
41. Della Porta, “1968,” 131.
42. Bretón, preface to *Le Revolver à cheveux blancs*, 11.
43. Lynn Hunt and Keith Barker quoted in Wasserstrom, *Student Protest*, 10–11.
44. Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society*, 26.
45. Feenberg and Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets*, 68.
46. For the category of retro-Marxism see Berman, *Power and the Idealists*.
47. Feenberg and Freedman, *Ibid.*
48. Marangopoulos, “Children of Marx,” 22.
49. It is important to note, however, that the workers in France around May 1968 did not always have clear-cut ideological prerogatives either, though they were constructed in the imaginary of the protesters as their mythical leaders. Cohn-Bendit conveyed this extreme workerism when he stated: “[The workers] were so present in our minds that we definitely had to get together some day.” See Cohn-Bendit, *Nous l’avons tant aimée*, 63.
50. See on this Zolberg, “Moments of Madness.”

51. See Gilcher-Holtey, *Die Phantasie an die Macht*, 40.
52. See *Trials of the Junta*.
53. Schorske, *Thinking with History*, 32.
54. Diouf, "Urban Youth," 63.
55. For an elaboration of the notion of the fusion between the paradigm of the international movement and national cultural tradition, see Gilcher-Holtey, "Mai 68 in Frankreich."
56. Sommer, *La violence politique*, 36.
57. Graham and Labanyi, "Culture and Modernity," 14.
58. Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society*, 29.
59. For the concept of the political lessons see Bermeo, "Democracy and the Lessons of Dictatorship."
60. Fernández, *Memoria y olvido*, 19–24.
61. See for example Kalyvas, "The 'December Insurrection.'"
62. Elias's text reads: "Pour expliquer le processus de civilisation, il faut procéder ... à l'examen simultané des structures physiques et des structures sociales dans leur ensembles." *La dynamique de l'Occident*, 262.
63. Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 3. Similarly, Hayden White has argued that "one can produce an imaginary discourse about real events that may not be less "true" for being imaginary." See *The Content of the Form*, 57.
64. Carr, et al., *Spain*, 94.
65. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations VIII: autour de 68*, Paris 1972, 194. Quoted by Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives*, 65.