

Against the conversion of the University to a regimental prison

An interview with a fighting student

Union of Green Libertarians

10 March 2021

We wrote in the past that as anarchists and autonomists of the countryside, our position is disadvantageous when it comes to the incidents of the cities. Often times the circumstances are such (like now) that we cannot be present in protests and squats where our presence is required. We watch in agony the incidents in Panormou and New Smyrna, where comrades and others are facing the repressive forces. Fists and clubs against batons, Molotov bombs against tear gas canisters.

Right now in Thessaloniki, the second largest city of Greece, a very important squat is taking place in the rectorship of Aristotle's University. Students and out-of-college comrades fight with cops and security agents against the abolition of the University and its conversion to a real regimental prison. The squat is 17 days old and keeps going on, with the people inside the university remaining undaunted while at the same time scenarios about evacuation seem more and more probable.

We decided to not stand idle. Against this fascistisation of the country, we decided to interview one of the many comrades who participate in the squat so that we can have a complete idea about what exactly is happening there. In addition, this text will be translated so that comrades abroad can be informed about the events as well.

UGL: Good morning comrade, how are you?

S: All fine guys, we fight. These days are hard, already from Monday it is heavily rumoured that the cops will barge in to evacuate the squat.

UGL: Did they try?

S: Not yet, but each day we are in agony. The day before yesterday they were saying that they would do it during that night, yesterday that they would do it on sunrise, today they are saying the same thing. With this psychological warfare and misinformation they try to break the morale of the people and reduce the number of individuals who stay inside. When this happens, this would be the moment they strike, I believe.

UGL: Sounds a very logical and probable scenario. The more people inside, the stronger the resistance. Is there a lot of police mobilisation in the city?

S: Yes, one could say that the entire city centre has almost sunk by the cops. You walk in Egnatia and you see cops, in Agelaki there are police vans, in Ethnikis Amynis there are roadblocks. Even if you are going to your job you can't escape inspection. Many times even they ask from people to open their bags for inspection. Crazy things.

UGL: Officially a junta then. Tell us a bit about how the squat started.

To give some context to the comrades abroad, in 1973 the forces of junta invaded with tanks the Polytechnic School of Athens when the students occupied the school and protested against the dictatorship. After the fall of junta, a bill about university asylum was passed, preventing essentially the cops from barging in campuses. Since the day Mitsotakis' government assumed power, it tried to upend this law and furthermore it managed to pass a bill about the abolishment of the university asylum and the implementation of a campus police force.

S: It's exactly as you say. Essentially the story began in February 22 when collectives and organisations moved to squat the rectorship of Aristotle's University with a rather vigorous presence from students of the Aristotle's University, as well as from the University of Macedonia and the International Hellenic University. The squat however could be even more vigorous if there was no sectarianism.

UGL: What do you mean?

S: Since there's a plethora of collectives with different ideologies, these things happen. E.g. the nihilists of Nadir have a strong presence within the squat and they have really bad relations with Syriza and KKE. On the other hand, some leftist factions and collectives declare against the squat and they only want solidarity protests, others make a fuss even for the punctuation marks in announcements, while others break the protesting marches in two just because they themselves want to appear as the leading forces in the protests.

UGL: Typical leftist stuff. Bureaucratic drivel and wannabe leaderism. But let's put them aside and let's move on to something more substantial: what's happening with repression, is there a strong police presence in the broader area of the campus?

S: Look, since the beginning of the mass protests, the cops were everywhere, ready for everything and I'm referring mainly to the protests about the Univeristy. Now, regarding the squat, we saw three police vans near the Ministry. The other day we had a sudden visit from Chrysochoidis (the Minister for Citizen Protection) and he brought with him even more cops from Athens. The city is therefore full of cops, especially at night if you go out you will only see cops and security agents. Since I mentioned the security agents, they are constantly present close to the university. The other day we saw four of them near the library and once we spotted them we started shouting slogans. Already many were taken over for questioning, both in protests and around the campus of Aristotle's University, but the highlight was the beating of that student by the cops. Sights which makes you want to vomit. Police cars do patrols constantly and cops sometimes gather around as if they are trying to besiege the complex. The last two days though their movements have decreased, that is we see very few police cars, which makes us believe that they are preparing for something.

UGL: Indeed this move looks pretty suspicious, surely an evacuation will be attempted, but the matter is when will this happen? We hope that the morale of the squatters won't break and that they will continue this struggle against junta. Even if we are far away, we are by your side and we support you!

S: We thank you, we too hope that everything will be OK. Farewell!

UGL: Farewell!

Post-script

Several hours after the interview, the police finally moved to evacuate the squat, even though the squatters' assembly had already decided to willingly end the squat this noon.

We asked one of our contacts to give us an update of the situation:

“The evacuation began this morning at around 06:00. I woke up by the sound of a police helicopter that was flying above the city. I got a call from a friend who informed me that the cops began an operation of evacuation of the squat. Hooded security agents barged in first and then the rest of them. There were cops and vans everywhere in Egnatia, Agias Sophias and Agiou Dimitriou. Two students were beaten fiercely by the repressive forces and 33 people were taken in for questioning, 16 of them were released, the rest of them will be charged with accusations of public service disruption. They tied up the students with tie wraps and tear gas was thrown in the area of the squat, whilst police drones were also present. Screams of a girl were heard while she was beaten fiercely by a cop, another girl suffered from a panic attack and they stuffed her with a water bottle, something that didn't help at all. There are two more squats in the School of Theatre and School of Physical Sciences which, for the moment, were not touched. Furthermore they didn't allow professors and party officials to enter the area. Today at the gathering at the Statue of Venizelos, a cop yelled to an assistant professor of Aristotle's University “we will kill you all”. A solidarity protest for the arrested people of the evacuated squat began, while all the central streets are full of hordes of cops.”

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