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Greece

No to the new McCarthyism!

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Theologos Psaradellis a courageous opponent of the regime of the colonels and a former supporter of the Organization of Internationalist Communists of Greece (OKDE - Greek section of the Fourth International) has been arrested by the Greek security services and accused of involvement in the 'November 17' (N17) group. This group emerged in the 1970s, targeting torturers and CIA agents close to the dictatorship, which won it a certain popularity. Evolving subsequently towards a sectarian and chauvinist 'Marxism-Leninism', N17 became isolated.

Psaradellis denies any participation in N17 and shares neither its nationalist ideology nor its methods. He admits to having participated in 1986 in a bank robbery that left neither dead nor wounded. Theo explains that he was drawn into this action by another activist (who subsequently died in a car accident) with the goal of financing the publication of the works of Pandelis Pouliopolos, the founder of Greek Trotskyism. "My ideology", he said in his deposition, "does not forbid the expropriation of banks, but it condemns, politically and morally, the assassination of political adversaries."

Théo stresses that he now believes this action was an error and that his Trotskyist comrades had neither approved it nor known of it. No proof exists of the participation of Psaradellis in 'N17'. Some supporters of this group, hoping to benefit from privileges accorded by anti-terrorist laws to 'repentant' informers, claimed that he was a member - claims that have subsequently been publicly retracted.

We print here an appeal for the release of Psaradellis and of Yannis Serifis, a respected trade unionist known for his fight against the dictatorship, who has also been accused by the police of being a member of N17.

Appeal

Some months ago the Greek police arrested several people who were accused of being members of the terrorist 'November 17' group. We have no sympathy for the narrow nationalist ideology of this group and still less for its methods, the assassination of political adversaries (parliamentarians, industrialists or right wing journalists). However, in a context of attacks on civil liberties in Europe in the name of the fight against 'terrorism', we think it is urgent to reaffirm that nothing justifies the undermining of the democratic principles of justice.

We declare our concern at the atmosphere of witch-hunt created by the dominant media and judicial practices which could compromise everyone's right to a fair trial. We are alarmed at this climate where armed resistance to the dictatorship of the colonels (1967-74) is accused of having 'prepared the ground' for terrorism; those politically exiled in Paris at the time of the dictatorship are victimised; the accused are deprived of the rights enjoyed by other prisoners; their lawyers are exposed to public condemnation; and working class militants who fought the dictatorship of the colonels and who are known for their differences with 'November 17' are arbitrarily imprisoned on the sole evidence of 'repentants' - a practice which has done great harm in Italy and which is tending to be generalised across Europe through anti-terrorist legislation.

– Theologos Psaradellis, a former Trotskyist activist, tortured and twice imprisoned under the dictatorship of the colonels, twice escaped - passing through France in 1971 - has been accused of participation in 'November 17' - which he denies - and held in prison since July 2002, despite the critical state of his health and the absence of any

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evidence. The sole crime for which he is, by his own admission, responsible - participation in a 'political' hold-up (which left nobody dead or wounded) in the early 1980s - has not been claimed by any terrorist group.

– Yannis Serifis, an anti-dictatorship activist and a respected libertarian trades unionist, became well known at the end of the 1970s when accused of 'terrorism' and of murder. He was acquitted, following a sensational trial, thanks to a powerful international mobilisation and the precious assistance of human rights organisations. Like Psaradellis, he has never hidden his opposition to the ideology and methods of 'November 17'. His arrest was publicly denounced by his former lawyer, E Yannopoulos, a former minister of justice.

The arrest and continued imprisonment of these two* activists, without the least proof of their 'terrorist' involvement, are entirely unjustified. That is why we add our voices to all those, like the Network for Political and Civil Liberties in Greece, who demand their immediate liberation.

Initial signatories

Tariq Ali, Etienne Balibar, Daniel Bensais, Denis Berger, Rony Brauman, Monique Chemillier-Gendreau, Christine Daure-Serfaty, Harlem desir, Marcel-Francis Kahn, Alain Krivine, Michael Löwy, Francois Maspero, Gilles Perrault, Michele Riot-Sarcey, Yves Salesse, Catherine Samary, Leon Schwartzberg, Abraham Serfaty, Enzo Traverso, Petr Uhl, Eléni Varikas, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Jean Ziegler.

Thanks to the campaign of protest, Yannis Serifis was freed on December 31, 2002 on 30,000 euros bail, but will be tried like the other accused.