

Révolution Permanente (NPA) silent on Greek youth protests against COVID-19

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Strikes and high school occupations by tens of thousands of students are spreading across Greece, against criminal back-to-school and herd immunity policies of right-wing Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the European Union (EU) on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two weeks after this struggle began, French and international media are maintaining a deafening silence on it. The *Révolution Permanente* web site, put out by the faction of France's New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) linked to the Socialist Workers Party (PTS) in Argentina and its *Izquierda Diario* web site, is complicit in this guilty silence. The NPA and its Latin American allies are lining up with mass media hostile to the struggles of workers and youth against the pandemic.

More than 700 educational establishments have been occupied across Greece. Sections of workers have gone on strike in solidarity while also demanding improved working conditions. Workers at the port of Piraeus in Athens blocked all shipping for 24 hours, and a strike forced Olympic Air to cancel 58 flights from Athens serving the Greek islands. Hospital doctors also marched in front of the Health Ministry to demand more staff and a scientific approach to fighting the pandemic.

The NPA's silence is all the more remarkable in that it has numerous contacts in Greece. The OKDE-Spartakos party is directly affiliated to the NPA, and is part of the middle class Antarsya coalition, whose leaflets on the high school occupations appear online. The NPA supported and hailed the election of the pro-austerity Syriza ("Coalition of the Radical Left") in 2015; it is still tied to Syriza through the Spanish Anticapitalistas, who are affiliated to the pro-austerity government of Podemos, Syriza's principal European

ally.

The NPA is not silent on this movement because the NPA is unaware of its existence, but rather because the NPA has decided not to draw attention to a struggle of capital importance. The struggle in Greece has the potential to develop into a European-wide and international struggle against a premature back-to-work and back-to-school policy imposed by the banks and ruling class, even as virus is rapidly spreading across Europe.

However, the silence of *Révolution Permanente* will surprise no one who has attentively followed the NPA's rightward evolution since its foundation in 2009. The NPA launched this site in 2015, shortly after the debacle of its support for the Islamist forces in the NATO proxy wars in Libya and Syria. After NPA spokesman Olivier Besancenot appealed to Paris to arm "revolutionaries" who were in fact CIA-backed Islamists, the NPA backed NATO's fascist-led putsch in Ukraine in February 2014 and supported the election of Syriza in Greece in January 2015.

After Syriza betrayed its electoral promises to end austerity, imposing billions of euros in social cuts that devastated Greek public hospitals and schools now threatened by COVID-19, the NPA sensed a danger on its left. It founded the *Révolution Permanente* web site, in a cynical attempt to give itself a clean bill of health by collaborating with the Argentinian PTS.

In a cynical attempt to cover up its previous political crimes, the NPA even dishonestly denounced on the *Révolution Permanente* web site the wars that the NPA had itself previously applauded.

Thus, without mentioning its previous support for the war in Syria, *Révolution Permanente* wrote in one article that "from the point of view of the workers' movement, of youth and all the oppressed in France it

is a question first and foremost of denouncing the machinations of French imperialism in Syria and the region, of opposing any French military intervention. Any success for French imperialism in Syria is success for our exploiters and oppressors at home. Our main enemy is at home!"

The only thing *Révolution permanente* did not raise was that the "main enemy" of the workers and the oppressed had been receiving the NPA's enthusiastic support in Syria throughout this period.

Thanks to these cynical declarations and their role in the union bureaucracy, supporters of *Révolution Permanente* joined in organising strikes and demonstrations by railway workers and Paris mass transit last winter. They drove the strikes into a dead end, providing them with no perspective. After the longest strike in France since May-June 1968, Macron rammed through his destruction of the rail workers' job and wage guarantees, opened up the rail system to competition and partially privatized the National Railways (SNCF).

This autumn, they gave "left" cover to the back-to-school drive led by the ruling class and the unions, channeling opposition among youth behind a bankrupt perspective of improving the health protocols used in the back-to-school drive. Despite these apparently "militant" demands, like free masks and testing, they had only minor differences with official policy. They essentially agreed with President Emmanuel Macron that it is necessary "to learn to live with the virus."

Révolution Permanente represents the same privileged social base in the trade unions and academia as the rest of the NPA. It shares the same class orientation of a Besancenot, who joins a protest march in the afternoon and then in the evening negotiates with an imperialist party like the French Socialist Party (PS). It seeks to disorient workers and youth who are looking for an alternative to the old bureaucracies discredited by decades of betrayals, and thus mislead and strangle any mass movement that could escape the control of the union tops and their political advisors.

Behind their support for a reactionary public health policy that is leading to thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of infections across Europe, lie material class interests of the bureaucrats and academics. Aware that the EU's trillion-euro pandemic bailouts will be disbursed through works council

meetings to the unions and research councils to the universities, they support EU policy. By supporting a deadly policy against the workers, they will maintain their usual financing. In short, they are totally corrupt and have had their snouts in the trough for years.

The *Parti de l'égalité socialiste*, PES (Socialist Equality Party) reiterates its warnings on the role played by the NPA in the COVID-19 pandemic. Eruptions of the class struggle and of youth protests are proceeding throughout the world against the criminal policies pursued by the capitalist ruling classes.

It is urgent for workers and youth to organize independently of the unions on an international scale, forming rank-and-file safety committees at their workplaces or schools, in preparation of a general strike aiming for the transfer of power to workers. Only such a perspective will ensure that workers take control of the international resources necessary to combat the virus. To meet such a struggle, the necessary revolutionary leadership of the PES is paramount, not that of the NPA which is a tool of the state machine and of French imperialism.



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