

## Historein

Vol 9 (2009)

Historising: 1968 and the Long Sixties



### From Coherence to Fragments: '1968' and the Making of Youth Politicisation in Greece in the 1970s

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doi: [10.12681/historein.24](https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.24)

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### To cite this article:

Papadogiannis, N. (2010). From Coherence to Fragments: '1968' and the Making of Youth Politicisation in Greece in the 1970s. *Historein*, 9, 76–92. <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.24>

*From Coherence  
to Fragments:  
'1968' and the Making  
of Youth Politicisation  
in Greece in the 1970s*

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Youth protest in the 1960s and 1970s in Europe has attracted increasing interest from the social sciences. In the current state of art, '1968' features prominently as a focal point in a number of overlapping teleologies. One approach links the formation of youth cultures in the late 1950s with the student uprisings in the late 1960s in which the examination of the case study of the Federal Republic of Germany predominates. For a number of social scientists, such as Uta Poiger and Kaspar Maase, the student uprisings in West Germany in 1968 were related to the mass consumerism and increasing "sexual openness" that had developed since the late 1950s: Young men and women in the latter period are described as challenging conservative social norms that constrained their interaction and which sanctioned premarital sexual relations, by appropriating American cultural products, such as "western" movies, rock and jazz music. This subversion is argued to have been expressed in the form of concrete political demands about sexuality during the youth revolts in the late 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, in a number of scholarly works that examine the case studies of France, West Germany and Italy from the late 1960s to the 1970s, the youth protest in the former decade is portrayed as the onset of a "counterculture", including squats and, to an extent, second-wave feminism and the gay liberation movement; this protest, however, is claimed to have petered out in the late 1970s, either due to the prevalence of "terrorism" or to the "retreat into the private".<sup>2</sup>

This article wishes to challenge the story of the decline of left-wing youth politicisation in the late 1970s by concentrating on a case study that points to another direction. In particular, we shall examine the impact of the representations of youth protest of the 1960s in Western Europe and the USA on the Greek politicised youth during the 1970s, focusing on the period from 1977 to 1981. The article will trace the development of this influence from the level of everyday life of young left-wingers in the early 1970s to the level of the ideological discourse of a number of left-wing youth groups in the late 1970s. This unfolding will be analysed in relation to the *crystallisation* of the ideological discourse of Communist youth groups in Greece during the 1970s, which shall be briefly examined, and its subsequent *modification* – but on no account decline – in the late 1970s. Representations of ‘1968’ alongside ‘Woodstock’ will be described as being propelled into the limelight in this process of reconfiguration. Still, we shall not claim that youth politicisation in Greece witnessed a ‘belated 1968’. On the contrary, ‘1968’ will be approached as a metaphor, which was signified multiply in a variety of Communist discourses.

The examination will go no further than the early 1980s, which may be distinguished as a cut-off point for two reasons: first of all, due to the formation of the government in Greece by a left-wing party, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok), in 1981, which aimed at implementing various demands expressed by the politicised youth of the 1970s; furthermore, due to the emergence of new patterns of protest, especially squats in Athens by newly-formed anarchist groups in the same period.

### ***The prelude (1970–1974)***

The early 1970s may certainly be described as an era of fluidity. Although there was a sizeable left-wing youth, only a tiny minority of it was affiliated to clandestine parties and youth organisations. The politicised students in the late dictatorship era socialised mainly through regional student groups, a meeting point of students of the same geographical origin. In contrast to Western European countries, such as France, Italy and West Germany, youth politicisation did not revolve around ‘1968’. Their main concern was opposition to the dictatorship, established in 1967. Politicised students were to an extent familiar with the ideological background of the French May, as Kornetis shows: a number of books, published by the Trotskyite publisher Neo Stochoi, disseminated the conceptual framework put forth by the Frankfurt School and, especially, Herbert Marcuse. These translations had a great impact on non-Trotskyites as well.<sup>3</sup> Still, the vertical structures of the Communist parties and their youth organisations were marginally contested, whereas the demands put forth had to do with “democratisation” and “class exploitation” and not with “alienation”.

However, there was another terrain where symbols or accounts of youth protest in Western Europe and the USA that occurred in the 1960s were more influential among left-wing students in Greece in the early 1970s: the popularisation of premarital sexual relations. This tendency was certainly not caused, but to an extent facilitated, by the circulation of representations of ‘1968’, ‘Berkeley’ and ‘Woodstock’ in popular culture in Greece in the 1970s. In general, “hippies” in particular were an object both of fascination and of criticism for large segments of the Greek society.

The perception that they were prone to drug consumption raised eyebrows both among politicised students, according to Kornetis, and in popular Greek films, such as *Marijuana Stop* (1971).<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, a number of popular Greek movies which appeared in the early 1970s, such as *Ti 30, ti 40, ti 50* ("30s, 40s, 50s, it makes no difference"; produced in 1972), employed the hippie counterculture as a positive symbol of sexual permissiveness. In the aforementioned film, the hippies were often evoked as conveying the "spirit of contemporary times", connected with the transgression of the dominant sexual norms in Greece. In fact, the movie included many scenes of courtship between people who differed in age significantly. Still, these relations would end up in marriage: not all institutions would be subject to subversion. The same association, namely between the hippie counterculture and sexual openness, also appeared in popular women's magazines, such as *Fantasio*, in the early and mid-1970s.<sup>5</sup>

Left-wing students became familiar with youth protest in Western Europe and the USA also through films, such as *Woodstock* (1970) and *The Strawberry Statement* (1970). Similarly, they did not denote for them merely confrontation with the dictatorial regime, but also a shift in sexual norms. L. M. remembers that: "We had watched *Woodstock* and *The Strawberry Statement*. In my mind there was an image of youth as a force that would change the world, which was subverting behaviour patterns."<sup>6</sup> Another politicised student of that period, A. H., narrates that: "in the universities, there was sexual freedom. You watched *Woodstock* and you didn't think you were a weirdo because you looked for sex before marriage."<sup>7</sup>

Representations of the hippie movement were also employed by young left-wingers to signify the excursions of male and female students as well as of a small number of secondary school pupils. The last years of the dictatorship witnessed the emergence of peer groups among pupils who attended the private high schools in Athens, such as the College of Athens, and belonged to the upper middle class. These groups, which were limited in number, comprised politicised individuals who were not affiliated at that point with any party, but were united in an anti-dictatorial sentiment. Most of their members would later join Rigas Feraios (henceforth RF), the Eurocommunist youth group. Such pupils and students identified in a vague sense with youth protest in Western Europe and the USA as a means of challenging the image of "respectable" children. This identification was articulated to a great extent through a subversive lifestyle, which these pupils coined "hippie". One of its core elements was travel to the Greek islands, which involved cheap ship tickets and sleeping in tents or just in sleeping bags. As N. E. narrates, referring to her experiences as a pupil until 1972 and, subsequently, as a university student in France, "we stayed in some miserable hotels, at camping sites. We had to travel to the least popular tourist attractions, the less expensive destinations. It was part of the framework of our emancipation."

The interviewee conceived "emancipation" as the freedom of both young men and women to develop unstable premarital relations.<sup>8</sup> This association is repeated in the life-stories of many other former left-wing pupils of private schools who joined RF subsequently, regardless of gender and their current political orientation.<sup>9</sup> Actually, interviews have illuminated that people involved in these peer groups have often preserved friendly relations to the present. These bonds are premised on the fact that these former pupils describe each other as 'avant-garde', a representation which they connect to a great extent with what they experienced as the transgression of upper-

middle class norms through their lifestyle in the early 1970s. Consequently, as van Boeschoten argues, it is not surprising that such moments feature prominently in their narrations, since they apparently constitute “parts of collective memory (that) remain unchanged”.<sup>10</sup>

However, it is questionable whether the representations of ‘Woodstock’, ‘Berkeley’ and ‘1968’ accommodated the spread of premarital sexual relations among young people beyond students and a segment of high school pupils in this period. As Renee Hirschon argues of the working-class area of Kokkinia, premarital sexual intercourse was still regarded as a stigma not only for the unmarried woman, but also for her entire family, at the beginning of the 1970s.<sup>11</sup>

### *The return of the 1940s (1974–1977)*

The mid-1970s saw the transition to democracy in Portugal, Greece and Spain. In Greece, Communist parties and youth organisations were legalised in 1974 and they became growingly in-

Table 1: The results of university elections in Greece, 1974–1981<sup>14</sup>

	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
<i>PASP</i> (affiliated to Pasok Youth)	24.37	25.55	25.06	21.36	27.6	26.7	26.8	25.2
<i>PSK</i> (affiliated to the KNE)	19.74	22.67	26.51	26.99	30.6	31.2	31.3	32.3
<i>DA–DE</i> (affiliated to RF)	14.6	16.42	17.52	20.94	16.7	7.5	8.9	10.1
<i>Choros</i>						7.2	11.3	8.4
<i>DAP–NDFK</i> (affiliated to New Democracy)	16.04	17.05	10.78	13.21	12.1	10.9	10.3	11.4
<i>AASPE</i> (Maoist)	3.75	3.65	4.85	4	3.2	1.9		
<i>PPSP</i> (Maoist)	2.64	4.3	5.47	4.8	5.4	5.6	5.6	2.1
<i>Turnout</i>	23,863	45,460	39,383	47,743	49,656	50,513	50,690	47,916

fluential, especially among students, as shown in Table 1. The two strongest Communist youth groups in Greece were the Communist Youth of Greece (KNE), affiliated with the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), and Rigas Feraios (RF), affiliated with the Communist Party of Greece (Interior) (KKE Interior). The main difference between them lay in the fact that KNE was pro-Soviet, while RF was sceptical of the USSR. Another crucial difference was the issue of the “autonomy” of “popular movements”: in 1976, RF declared that the decisions for the activity of social movements had to be taken by the bodies of these movements and not by a party apparatus outside them. The role of the KKE Interior and RF was declared by their leadership to be their co-ordi-

nation in the direction of the “common popular struggle”.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, the KNE was in favour of the “correct guidance” of these movements from the “one and only” Communist Party (KKE) and its youth organisation, KNE. Concerning their constituencies, the influence of both groups was confined mainly to the urban centres: RF attracted mostly upper- and middle-class students, while the KNE recruited numerous young workers alongside middle-class and working-class students.<sup>13</sup> The Pasok Youth was also influential. Less popular, but still important, were the Maoist student groups, PPSP (Proodeytiki Panspoudastiki Sindikalistiki Parataxi, Progressive All-Students’ Unionist Movement) and AASPE (Antifasistiki Antiimperialistiki Spoudastiki Parataxi Elladas, Antifascist Anti-imperialist Student Movement in Greece), aligned with the Communist Party of Greece Marxist-Leninist (KKE m-l) and the Revolutionary Communist Party of Greece (EKKE), respectively. The Communist and the Socialist university student organisations remained strongest until the mid-1980s. On the contrary, the New Democracy Youth Organisation (ONNED), the youth group of the governing conservative party, in office from 1974 to 1981, became active among students only after the election of the Pasok government in 1981.

Despite the segmentation in numerous Socialist and Communist groups, the politicised youth during this period shared the common identity of “progressive” and “democratic forces”, which ranged from centre-left to the far left. This identity was an outcome of convergence of left-wing and centre-left groups and persons that had taken place mainly during the years of the dictatorship and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The “progressive” membership, regardless of its specific political orientation, rallied round the demands of “democratisation” and “national liberation”. The latter was also associated with the crisis in Cyprus, since the USA was accused of interfering and supporting the Turkish military intervention against the Cypriots, who were largely equated with the Greek-Cypriots. According to Voulgaris, the post-dictatorship years were marked by an explosion of expectations of the social and political groups that had been excluded from positions of power since the end of the Civil War.<sup>15</sup> Left-wingers expected that socialist transformation was possible in Greece. The demands for “democratisation” and “national liberation” were embedded in an “antifascist, anti-imperialist” narrative, different versions of which were shared by all left-wing parties and youth organisations in this period. What emerged was a culture of commemoration of various events that occurred in the period extending from the 1930s until the 1970s in Greece. The resistance against the tripartite occupation of Greece by Germany, Bulgaria and Italy from 1941 to 1944 alongside the Polytechnic uprising in 1973 featured prominently in this collective memory. In this environment, two prominent casualties were rock music and representations of ‘1968’ and ‘Woodstock’, since they were deemed irrelevant to the dominant perceptions of youth politicisation. Young left-wingers would instead sing the music of Mikis Theodorakis as well as partisan songs in tavernas and *boîtes*. They would also watch what they called “progressive” movies, which had mainly to do with ideologically committed, Greek cinema, such as *Thiassos* (Actors’ Colony, 1975) by Theodoros Angelopoulos, which again referred to Greek history from the 1930s to the 1970s.

The shaping of the aforementioned memory was not merely the outcome of the spontaneous explosion of expectations of left-wingers of different directions. It also constituted a top-bottom process, in which the Socialist and Communist youth groups were actively involved. Not only did they organise many of the aforementioned commemorations, but they also constructed particu-

lar modes of reception of cultural products, which were classified into “progressive” and “reactionary”. “Progressive” cultural products were mainly, but not exclusively, those associated with the “Greek popular traditions” as opposed to the “American way of life” – a model that had been introduced into the Greek left in the 1950s.<sup>16</sup> All Socialist and Communist youth groups embraced this taxonomy in the aftermath of the dictatorship, but the KNE provided the most detailed definitions. “Traditional” cultural products included Greek folk music, but mostly revolved around the recent past, privileging rebetiko<sup>17</sup> and partisan songs of the 1940s. In fact, in the case of the KNE, “tradition” was approached as an ahistorical category that ran through the history of the “Greek people” and reproduced two emotions: the “suffering” due to the “exploitation” of “people” due to “capitalism” and “imperialism” and optimism in the “ultimate victory” of its “struggle against oppression”, whatever this “oppression” was defined by the pro-USSR organisation to be in every era. By contrast, the “American way of life” was associated in the official texts of the KNE with unstable sexual relations and “depoliticisation”. The classification of cultural products by left-wing youth groups in the mid-1970s was predominant in the leisure pursuits of the politicised youth in the mid-1970s: the relation of youth politicisation to leisure was predicated during this period on long-lasting discussions, often in an informal fashion, which were called *pigadakia*. These discussions aimed at distilling “progressive” political messages from cultural products, which were meant to reproduce the feeling of common belonging among persons aligned with the same group as well as to help recruit new members.

However, a set of dynamics ushered in a period of challenging of this regime of politicisation. A growing number of intellectuals voiced critique on the concept of “traditions”. They argued that the latter constituted a historically determined concept which they linked with orally transmitted cultural patterns: therefore, it could not be approached as transcending historical eras and could certainly not be applied to the case of Greece in the 1970s. In a relevant debate, which was held in the pages of *Anti*, a magazine that served as a forum of exchange of ideas of Socialist and Communist forces in Greece, in 1976, a number of intellectuals, such as the social anthropologist Alki Kyriakidou-Nestoros, argued that “popular tradition as a historical reality does not exist any more”.<sup>18</sup> Another development was the proliferation from the early 1970s of leisure activities experienced by young consumers, including Communists, as *time without purpose*. A category of such leisure pursuits was connected with rock music: it included the spread, in the late 1970s, of bars and pubs where rock music was played, such as “Ippopotamos” in Athens and “Lucky Luke” in Thessaloniki. In these venues, the activities of patrons no longer revolved around collective singing or discussing the meaning of lyrics, which had been the cornerstone of the message-centred approach to music by young Communists and Socialists since the mid-1970s.

### ***Memory battles (1977–81)***

These dynamics coincided with a wave of splits that affected the entire range of left-wing youth organisations. Even though the KNE, RF and the Pasok Youth remained by far the most influential forces among students, with the KNE retaining a solid following among young workers, a new agent of left-wing youth politicisation emerged in 1978: It was a fluid network of autonomous Communists who called themselves Χώρος (Choros). It included organised groups, main-

ly the Greek Communist Youth “Rigas Feraios” – Second Panhellenic Congress (EKON RF–B’ Panelladiki), which split from RF in 1978, as well as the radical left-wing OPA (Organosi gia mia proletariaki Aristera, Organisation for a Proletarian Left). Unaffiliated ex-members of the Maoist groups, the KNE and Pasok Youth also joined. This network was active mainly in the form of autonomous student groups enjoying a considerable level of support, as appears in Table 1. However, with the exception of some cultural societies, such as the Mousiko Kafetheatro (Musical Café-Theatre) in Palaio Faliro, and some magazines, such as Exodos in Koukaki, they lacked any significant appeal in lower middle- and working-class districts.

Even though withdrawals from the politicised youth groups did not constitute a novelty, it was the first time since the collapse of the dictatorship that they led to a substantial critique of the very language, the practices and the organisational structure of all left-wing parties and youth groups. The participants in Choros<sup>19</sup> did not share the expectation that Communist or Socialist youth membership would help bring about socialist transformation. On the contrary, they accused these actors of limiting themselves to the proposition of reforms, which the autonomous left-wingers regarded as “technocratic” measures that actually help reproduce the capitalist system.<sup>20</sup> Choros never acquired a clear organisational structure, but the common point of the persons that participated in it was the concept of *amfisvitsi* (challenging) of social norms alongside the regime of politicisation that had dominated the mid-1970s. This challenging extended mainly into three domains: the rejection of top–bottom hierarchical structures – which were blamed for fostering bureaucratic relations – as well as of the *entatikopiisi* (intensification) of university studies. The participants in Choros argued that these processes would lead to the *ensomatosi* or *entaxi* (integration) of the youth into the capitalist system. In fact, this language derived from the theoretical endeavours of the wing of RF that split in 1978 and formed B Panelladiki and, especially, from the writings of Antonis Maounis.<sup>21</sup> The latter, drawing on the structuralist Marxist concept of the ideological state apparatus, approached the education system as means of *entaxi* of the youth into the “bourgeois society”. Similarly, again following structuralist Marxism, the autonomous young left-wingers criticised the regulation of sexual behaviour through guidelines, again on the grounds that it facilitated “integration” into the capitalist system. Their main target was a set of guidelines that the KNE published in 1977 and which provided details about the desirable behaviour patterns of young Communists at school and work as well as in their family and sexual relations.<sup>22</sup>

From October 1979, Choros became increasingly visible. On 25 October, it organised a protest which gathered forces that openly challenged the National Student Union of Greece (EFEE) (the secondary body co-ordinating the activities of the administrative councils of university students) for the first time since the collapse of the dictatorship. In December of the same year, Choros, together with the Maoist AASPE and PPSP groups, emerged victorious in a number of general assemblies of students, which voted for the instant occupation of university departments in Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Ioannina and Rethymno in protest against Law 815. The occupants opposed the law as “intensifying” their studies by reducing the opportunities that a student had to take an exam. The occupations petered out by the Christmas holiday, but the New Year would see the decision of the government to abolish the law.

Anti-bureaucratic demands and the very practice of occupying university departments might



tempt an historian to regard the emergence of Choros and in particular the December 1979 occupations, as the Greek 'belated 1968'. However, such a characterisation would obscure the specificities of late-1970s Greece. Despite raising similar concerns about integration for instance, many participants in Choros were deeply influenced by a discourse, namely structuralist Marxism, which was rather neglected by the protagonists of May 1968; in addition, the very Other of Choros was not the fascist past, as in the case of protestors in West Germany and Italy in the late 1960s, but the narrative that regulated politicisation in mid-1970s Greece, namely an "anti-fascist, anti-imperialist" language. Actually, what needs to be stressed is how representations of '1968' were appropriated by and circulated among the participants in Choros.

The representations of youth protest in the 1960s in Western Europe and the USA spread through a variety of channels in the late 1970s. The older left-wingers, as indicated above, including members of the KNE, who had been students during the last years of the dictatorship, had come into contact with the work of Marcuse that were published by Neoi Stochoi.<sup>23</sup> In 1978, grasping the opportunity afforded by the lapse of ten years since the youth revolts in Western Europe, the magazine *Anti* published a number of articles about what followed the May uprisings in France, as well as a number of leaflets distributed then by the Situationists and the Trotskyist JCR (Jeunesse communiste révolutionnaire, Revolutionary Communist Youth).<sup>24</sup> Most articles had in common the line of argument that, even though the uprisings did not topple the political status quo, they "shook established social and political norms". Another influential channel was *Pezodromio* (Pavement), a Greek anarchist magazine published since the early 1970s, who was sympathetic to Situationism and which included translations from texts produced during the youth revolts of 1968. Although the Situationists never commanded strong support among Greek youth, citations of their articles are found in the magazine of EKON RF-B' Panelladiki, *Agonas gia tin Kommounistiki Ananeosi*.<sup>25</sup> Another source seems to have been narrations of Greek students who were in Paris in May 1968. One such narrative, by Michalis Papagiannakis, appeared in *Thourios*, the RF newspaper, in 1978 as part of a retrospective of the May–June 1968 protests in France. All the aforementioned sources focused mostly on the French case. Nevertheless, at the end of the 1970s, there also appeared translations of texts published by Italian protest movements of the late 1960s. For example, in 1980, *Rixi*, the OPA magazine, published a translated extract from the fifth volume of *Proletarians without Revolution* by Renzo del Carria, which referred to the student uprising in Italy in 1968 and its shift to agitation in the factories.<sup>26</sup> Representations of youth protest in Western Europe and the USA in the 1960s also appeared in the publications of Choros, albeit in a fragmented fashion. The French May in particular would be a recurrent point of reference in the language and practices of the participants in Choros, though in a subtle way that was determined by the broader reconfiguration of the ideological discourse of the Left that they performed. Actually, the meaning of '1968' for the autonomous young left-wingers was barely clarified in any extensive account or analysis. This vagueness derived from their stance towards the concept of "role-model" in general, connected with the rejection of the dichotomy between the "American way of life" and the "Greek popular traditions" in numerous Choros texts.<sup>27</sup> The young autonomous left-wingers would participate in the aforementioned broader debate about the meaning of "Greek traditions". They would actually go further to argue that such classifications are "innately conservative" and would abstain from substituting them with other bipolar models. This rejection affected both the stance of the participants of Choros

towards the culture of commemoration that emerged in the first post-dictatorship years. Most notably, a number of members that belonged to B' Panelladiki would criticise the ritualisation of the memory of the resistance (1942–44) or of the Polytechnic Uprising (1973) in a number of events organised by left-wing parties and youth organisations. They claimed that they constituted efforts to “subordinate” history to an eschatological metanarrative that would vindicate the guidelines produced by the higher ranks of these actors, to which the lower ranks and the social movements were demanded to conform – an act that, according to the autonomous young left-wingers, reproduced “bureaucratic” relations. Voicing a vehement critique of this “instrumentalisation” of time, as they labelled it, they abstained from seeking an alternative role model to identify with. They privileged what they called “experimentation” that could potentially lead to different types of organisational structure of the youth movement in Greece.<sup>28</sup> The potential outcome of this “experimentation”, however, remained unclear to the participants in Choros throughout the late 1970s. Actually, it should be stressed that in the case of B' Panelladiki, from its formation, its participants debated the issue whether it should adopt a rigid organisational model based on democratic centralism, or a looser one, diffusing its activities across wider autonomous groups. A small section of the group, including Antonis Maounis, argued for the former, whereas a somewhat bigger contingent, including Kostas Livieratos and Giannis Gouzoulis, was in favour of the latter. The majority, however, which included Dimitris Psarras, was in favour of a middle

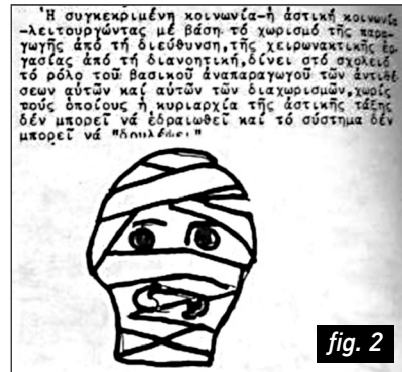
ground. It was mainly during and after the 1979 occupations that in practice B' Panelladiki became less visible as a distinct force and operated mostly within wider groupings, such as the fluid network of Choros. Thus, especially since late 1979, the texts produced by Choros reproduced a self-representation of an incomplete, inconsistent collective self. In this vein, autonomous young left-wingers were certainly fascinated with slogans and images of '1968', which served as an impetus for challenging established social and political patterns, signifying the protest of the network against “ensomatosi” (integration). The autonomous young leftwingers, however, would prove reminiscent of 1968 through the scattered images or slogans that appeared in the texts of Choros. These images and slogans were not linked in an explicit way with the content of the text they supplemented. Sometimes, the very fact that these representations emanated from the youth revolts of 1968 in Western Europe was usually not mentioned, as these



Poster published by the student group of B' Panelladiki, 1979<sup>30</sup>

images and slogans were employed without attribution. Such a use of symbols of 1968 is evident in the poster of the student group of B Panelladiki in 1979, which included the slogan put forward during the French May: “intensification, intensification, integration”.<sup>29</sup>

Another one was the cover page of the founding charter of B Panelladiki, featuring the image of a young woman from the French May, without any further reference to that particular youth revolt in the text itself.<sup>31</sup> Images of 1968 would also be employed by autonomous left-wing pupils, especially in the magazine *Touvlo*, following the same pattern as in *Agonas gia tin Kommounistiki Ananeosi*: their origins would not be mentioned. Similarly, without attribution, *Rixi* would accompany its account of the 1979 occupations with various slogans that were written on the walls of the occupied departments, including “God, I suspect that you are a left-wing intellectual”, which was first chanted in Paris in May 1968.<sup>32</sup> Concomitantly, in the publications of Choros, there are very few explicit references to or detailed analyses of the French May and its exact significance for the young autonomous left-wingers. One exception was the aforementioned text in *Rixi*, which, however, consisted mainly of the extract from del Carria’s *Proletarians without Revolution*. Its introductory note, written by the magazine’s editorial team, mentioned that only some of the ideas expressed by the author were endorsed by OPA, again refraining from providing any further information.



An extract from *Touvlo*<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, the participants in Choros did not portray ‘1968’ as the substitute for the “partisans of the 1940s” in the subject-position of the role model in their discourse. This is especially manifest in analyses just after the ending of the 1979 occupations, which they stressed were not “a copycat of May 1968”.<sup>34</sup>

The rejection of the juxtaposition of the “American way of life” with “Greek popular traditions” would affect the relation of leisure to politics that Choros espoused. Rock music was one of the favourite cultural products of its participants. In general, after a short period of decline from 1974 to 1977, rock music experienced rising popularity from 1977 among Greek youth, politicised or not.<sup>35</sup> The most popular genres for both categories were rock produced from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, including the folk rock of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, the psychedelic rock of the Doors, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, as well as the music of the Who and the Rolling Stones.<sup>36</sup> As regards Choros, its participants would organise rock parties quite often, especially in the premises of the occupied universities in 1979.<sup>37</sup> According to a number of articles and interviews, the young autonomous left-wingers associated these music genres with youth protest movements that had emerged in the 1960s in the USA and in Western European countries.<sup>38</sup> As researchers of cultural appropriation would describe, drawing on the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, the participants in Choros were active consumers that received rock music through a process of “bricolage”: they “re-accented, rearticulated or trans-coded the material of mass culture to their own ends”.<sup>39</sup> In this case, the representations of the ‘French May’ would be

conflated with those of 'Woodstock'. This connection, especially with the latter, seems to have appeared already in the latter years of the dictatorship among young left-wingers, as one interviewee narrated to Kornetis: "The message that was coming from abroad, mainly from abroad, was the following: the wind of freedom that was unleashed after May '68. Since in Greece there was no political discussion, it was banned by the Junta, it's strange but I think, without being sure, these are at least my memories, that the message was coming mainly from the States and mainly through music. Woodstock, the music, Dylan, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and so on."<sup>40</sup>

E. Q., male, RF cadre until 1978 and member of B Panelladiki from 1978 to 1982, employed the same association to describe his music tastes in the late 1970s. He narrated that he listened to the "rock music of the Who, Jimi Hendrix and the Doors", which he called the "music of May '68". Of course, this connection could be attributed to the fact that the interview was conducted in 2008, the fortieth anniversary of the French May. It was a period that teemed with relevant discussions, which may have tempted the narrator to ground this aspect of his life-story on that event. Nevertheless, texts produced by Choros in the late 1970s also employ the link of late 1960s rock music with 'Woodstock' and '1968'; they are rather evasive, however, in analysing the reasons why they established this link. Rock music would not just substitute partisan songs for the autonomous young left-wingers. While empathising with young rebels of the late 1960s in France or the USA through listening to rock music, they did not signify this experience as helping transform them into dedicated militants of a 'Greek May'. Rock denoted norms that they opposed and not a particular framework that they endorsed, so it could barely serve as means of instruction. As argued in *Aythairta*, the Athens area newspaper of B Panelladiki,

. . . those forces that the crisis in the Left is unleashing . . . need, besides their new political identity, a different form of leisure. It is this need that brings them close to rock music . . . From the certainties of conformity to the contemplation of *rixi* [rupture]. From the demand for an alternative, democratic Law 815 to the occupations. From the gatherings at the lppopotamos bar to the parties in the university schools. That is how a homogeneous public is constructed. A public aware of the limits of music, which learns to entertain itself neither with the dance of the revolution nor with the dance of forgetting.<sup>41</sup>

The ending of the university occupations ushered in a period during which "amfisvitsi" (challenging) would dominate the debates among young left-wingers. The major issue at stake was the relation of popular movements to left-wing party structures. However, not all young Communists shared the rejection of the American way of life/Greek popular tradition dichotomy. The KNE continued to assume that "Greek popular tradition" in particular and "progressive art" in general, was a resource that, by displaying the "suffering" of the "people", helped instil "discipline", thus contributing to the "correct path" of the "organised struggle" of the Greek youth. In this vein, it was argued in its official texts that the "struggle of youth" needed to be led by the "working class" and its "avant-garde party", namely the KKE, as well as its youth organisation. The youth movements of the 1960s in the USA and Western Europe were depicted as lacking the correct guidance of a pro-USSR Communist party, which would consolidate their alliance with the "working class".<sup>42</sup> Therefore, a clear genealogy was developed, concerning '1968', 'Berkeley' and 'Woodstock', based on the leitmotiv of the "spontaneous reaction" of youth to the "misery

generated by capitalism”, but which was not “guided” by the “avant-garde party of the working class” and, consequently, fell into disarray, either being co-opted or falling into drug consumption. The aforementioned narrative drew heavily upon a discussion among members of the PCF (French Communist Party), which was published in the party magazine, *Cahiers du Communiste*, a translation of which appeared in *Odigitis*, the official KNE newspaper.<sup>43</sup>

Members of RF placed themselves between the approach of Choros and that of the KNE. On the one hand, they challenged the top-bottom decision-making that they claimed that had been prevalent in the student movement from the restoration of democracy until the eruption of the occupations in 1979 and which they blamed mainly on the KNE, while also being self-critical. In a sense, they continued the critique they had voiced since 1976 with the decision on the “autonomous popular movements”, which should not be controlled, but co-ordinated by Communist parties and youth organisations. Nevertheless, in marked difference from the language they used until the occupations, they no longer regarded themselves as representing the sole force of “Communist renewal”. Rather, they argued that B Panelladiki and Choros in general, alongside the autonomous feminist groups, had formed a “network” of cultural societies and women’s groups, which had promoted the desirable “autonomy” in student and other movements. However, their stance towards Choros was ambivalent: this network was accused of being prone to mounting critique without offering a viable alternative. Thus, it was maintained that members of RF ought to cooperate with these “broader renewal forces” so as to orientate them towards the struggle for the transformation of state institutions through a gradual process of radical reforms, which they named “structural”. This claim was expressed not only in the official language of the group, but also in many letters of its members and cadres before and during its second congress in 1980. Some of these letters included representations of the youth revolts in the USA and in Western European countries during the 1960s. In a letter from Andreas Nefeloudis, it was argued that the American counterculture and May 1968, like the rock music of the period when they occurred, reached an “impasse” (he viewed Jim Morrison’s suicide as an example) or were co-opted, due to the fact that they lacked a “positive perspective”, putting forth an alternative institutional framework.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusions

This article abstains from seeking a ‘belated 1968’ in the case of Greece. On the contrary, it explores the representations of ‘1968’ that were employed by young left-wingers of different directions in Greece in the 1970s. It argues that the shifting expectations of a segment of the politicised youth from the mid- to late 1970s affected the form of the ideological discourse that regulated its activity. The explosion of expectations about the transition to democracy and the possibility of socialist transformation that the entire left-wing youth experienced in the first post-dictatorship years (1974–1977) was premised on the construction of a collective memory of the period extending from the 1930s to the 1970s in Greece. Young left-wingers identified particularly with the partisans of the resistance in the early 1940s and they would portray them as role-models for their political activity. Most notably in the case of the KNE, this self-fashioning would be based on a normative discourse that juxtaposed the “American way of life” with the “Greek pop-

ular traditions” and relegated the latter to the status of a set of values that could regulate every area of the social life of its members. However, various dynamics such as an intellectual debate that problematised “tradition” and the emergence of Choros affected both the content and the form of the ideological discourse of a segment of the politicised youth. No longer confident of the organisational structure and the practices of politicised youth groups, the participants in Choros challenged the normative discourse based on “tradition” as reproducing “bureaucratic relations”. They became growingly interested in representations of ‘1968’, which had been first disseminated in the last years of the dictatorship (1970–1974), but had influenced only the everyday lives, and not the ideological discourse, of young left-wingers. Abstaining, however, from seeking a substitute for “tradition” as a point of reference, the autonomous young left-wingers would employ ‘1968’ in their language and practices in a fragmented fashion: images and slogans of the French 1968 would be scattered in texts of Choros without any further analysis of what exactly the French May represented for them. In addition, this segment of the politicised youth would experience listening to rock music as a way of identifying with ‘Woodstock’ and ‘1968’; however, in marked distinction to the message-centrism of the mid-1970s, the participants in Choros would not regard this act as helping breed particular patterns of behaviour that would ensure militancy. The emergence of representations of ‘1968’ in the audiovisual landscape of youth protest in the late 1970s affected two other key actors, who discussed representations of ‘1968’ *vis-à-vis* the relation of popular movements with party structures: the young Eurocommunists, first of all, approached them ambivalently in their quest for “structural reforms” that would integrate the activity of “autonomous popular movements”; moreover, the members of the KNE, who appropriated the clear narrative of decline of ‘1968’ protest that was employed by the PCF in order to argue against the “ineffectiveness” of “unorganised” and “undisciplined” struggle that, as they argued, led the youth protests of 1968 in Western Europe into disarray.

## NOTES

- \* I would like to express my gratitude to Adam Tooze, Efi Avdela, Antonis Liakos, Yannis Voulgaris, Nasia Yakovaki, Polymeris Voglis and Riki van Boeschoten for their remarks. Of course, I alone am responsible for errors and analysis that remain.
- 1 Kaspar Maase, "Establishing Cultural Democracy: Youth, 'Americanization' and the Irresistible Rise of Popular Culture", in Hanna Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years, A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949–68*, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2001, pp. 444–46; Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock and Rebels, Cold War and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2000, pp. 218–19.
  - 2 Second-wave feminism is often described both as a reaction to and as a product of 1968. The articulation of the demand for "sexual emancipation" in the youth protests in the late 1960s is regarded as being an impetus for the claim of Feminists that women control their body and sexuality. However, youth protest in the late 1960s was also male-dominated; second-wave feminism is presented in the relevant historiography as having largely erupted as a reaction to it. For more about youth protest in the 1960s and the 1970s, see Ronald Fraser, *A Student Generation in Revolt*, London: Pantheon Books, 1988, pp. 304–10. Lumley argues that the prevalence of terrorism took place in Italy after 1978. For more, see Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency. Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978*, London: Verso, 1990, pp. 279–93, 337. Regarding the narrative of "depoliticisation/individualisation", see Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998, pp. 130–39. Actually, Gilcher-Holthey considers this "counter-culture" as a form of "retreat into the private". See Ingrid Gilcher-Holthey, *Die 68er Bewegung: Deutschland, Westeuropa, USA*, Munich: Beck, 2001.
  - 3 Kostis Kornetis, "Student Resistance to the Greek Military Dictatorship: Subjectivity, Memory, and Cultural politics, 1967–1974" (unpublished PhD thesis, European University Institute, 2006), pp. 209–10.
  - 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 226–27.
  - 5 "Interview with Vicky Vanita", *Fantazio*, 2 September 1975, pp. 42–45.
  - 6 Interview with L. M., Athens, 17 May 2008. L. M. is male and now leans towards Synaspismos, the Coalition of the Left, of Movements and Ecology. In the interviews that I have conducted, I use initials that do not correspond to the real names of the interviewees. The full transcripts of the interviews or substantial transcripts of them will be published in my PhD thesis.
  - 7 Interview with A. H., Athens, 3 April 2008.
  - 8 Interview with N. E., Athens, 12 April 2008.
  - 9 Interview with L. M., Athens, 17 May 2008. Interview with D. M., Athens, 10 October 2006. D. M. is male and aligned with Pasok.
  - 10 Riki van Boeschoten, *Ανάποδα Χρόνια. Συλλογική Μνήμη και Ιστορία στο Ζιάκα Γρεβενών* (Troubled years: collective memory and history in Ziakas, Grevena), Athens: Plethron, 1997, p. 215.
  - 11 Renee Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 1998, pp. 106–133.
  - 12 Decision of the First Panhellenic Conference of RF, 1976, p. 4, Archives of Contemporary Social History (ASKI), Archive of the First Panhellenic Conference.
  - 13 Argyris Yfantopoulos, «Η οργανωτική ανάπτυξη του Πήγα Φεραίου στα πρώτα μεταδικτατορικά χρόνια. Η

- περίπτωση των συνοικιακών οργανώσεων της Αθήνας» (The expansion of RF in the first post-dictatorship years. The case of the Athens districts), in *Η ελληνική νεολαία στον 20ό αιώνα. Πολιτικές διαδρομές, κοινωνικές πρακτικές και ολιτιστικές εκφράσεις* (Greek youth. Political pathways, social practices, cultural expressions, conference proceedings), Athens: Themelio, forthcoming 2009.
- 14 Percentage of votes received by each of the student groups mentioned and voter turnout in the student elections in the period 1974–1981. In contrast with today, throughout the examined period all student groups agreed on the published results. Minor divergences, however, sometimes existed, such as in the late 1970s, on how to estimate the votes of groups, where members of both RF and B Panelladiki participated. In the case of Choros, it should be noted that some of its participants, such as those aligned with OPA (Organosi gia mia proletariaki Aristera, Organisation for a Proletarian Left), did not participate in student elections. The figures for the years 1974–1978 derive from data provided by the magazine *Anti*. Data for the years 1979–1981 comes from Dimitris Aravantinos, «Το Μεταπολιτευτικό φοιτητικό και συνδικαλιστικό κίνημα» (The student and syndicate movement of the Metapolitefsi), in: I. K. Hassiotis, D. Aravantinos, *75 χρόνια, Το πανεπιστήμιο της Θεσσαλονίκης στην αυγή του νέου αιώνα* (75 years: The University of Thessaloniki at the dawn of the new century), Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2002.
  - 15 Yannis Voulgaris, *Η Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης, 1974–1990* (Post-dictatorship Greece, 1974–1990), Athens: Themelio, 2002, p. 54.
  - 16 See Efi Avdela, ««Φθοροποιοί και ανεξέλεγκτοι απασχολήσεις»: Ο ηθικός πανικός για τη νεολαία στη μεταπλεμική Ελλάδα» (“Corruptive and uncontrollable habits”: The moral panic for the youth in post-war Greece), *Synchrone Themata* 90 (2005): 30–43, and Kostas Katsapis, *Ήχοι και απόηχοι: κοινωνική ιστορία του ροκ εν ρολ φαινομένου στην Ελλάδα, 1956–67* (Sound and echoes: a social history of the rock and roll phenomenon in Greece, 1956–67), Athens: General Secretariat for Youth, 2007.
  - 17 Rebetiko is a popular music genre that developed in Greece among refugees from Turkey, mainly in the interwar period.
  - 18 Alki Kyriakidou-Nestoros, «Για το Λαϊκό Πολιτισμό» (On popular culture), *Anti*, 20 March 1976, pp. 44–45.
  - 19 I choose to name them “participants” instead of “members” in order to indicate the difference between the loose structures of Choros in comparison to RF and, especially, the KNE. They are also mentioned as “autonomous young left-wingers”.
  - 20 «Ντοκουμέντα της Β Πανελλαδικής Συνδιάσκεψης της ΕΚΟΝ Ρήγας Φεραίος. Πολιτική Απόφαση» (Documents of the second Panhellenic congress of ΕΚΟΝ RF. Political decision). *Agonas gia tin Kommounistiki Ananeosi*, May 1978, pp. 24–35.
  - 21 The concept of “michanismoι entaxis”, as introduced by Maounis, can be found in many articles written since the mid-1970s by young Eurocommunists, who would later withdraw and form B Panelladiki. Such an example, where also the influence from Louis Althusser and Nikos Poulantzas is manifest, is: «Παιδεία και κοινωνικός χώρος» (Education and social space), *Dimokratikos Agonas Londinou*, January–February 1976, pp. 45–64.
  - 22 «Για την αγωνιστική ταξική πατριωτική διαπαιδαγώγηση της νεολαίας» (Declaration for the militant class patriotic education of the youth), Athens 1977, or the “Farakos’ guidelines” as they were usually referred to, after the KKE cadre who introduced part of them.



- 23 Kornetis, "Student Resistance", pp. 209–10.
- 24 D. Depsis, «Η νοσταλγία της εξέγερσης» (The nostalgia for the rebellion), *Anti*, 20 May 1978, pp. 23–26; «Τρεις προκηρύξεις του Μάη» (Three brochures of May), *Anti*, 20 May 1978, pp. 28–29; «Ο γαλλικός Μάης και οι Έλληνες του Παρισιού» (French May and the Greeks of Paris), *Anti*, 20 May 1978, pp. 30–31.
- 25 Diamantis Basantis, «Ο λόγος των αλιγατόρων» (The discourse of the alligators), *Agonas gia tin Kommounistiki Ananeosi*, May 1980, p. 55.
- 26 «Ο ιταλικός «Μάης» των φοιτητών» (The Italian student "May"), *Rixi*, February 1980, pp. 88–103
- 27 Diamantis Basantis, «Μερικές σκέψεις για την παράδοση» (Some reflections on tradition), *Agonas gia tin Kommounistiki Ananeosi*, October 1979, pp. 28–31.
- 28 Giannis Gkouzoulis, Kostas Livieratos, S. Spanos, «Στάση» (Stop), *Agonas gia tin Kommounistiki Ananeosi*, June–July 1978, pp. 47–55.
- 29 For a list of slogans that were written or chanted in Paris in May, 1968, see: Andrew Feenberg and Jim Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets: the French May Events of 1968*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, c2001.
- 30 Giannis Floros, «Συμπεράσματα από τις φοιτητικές εκλογές» (Conclusions from student elections), *Agonas gia tin Kommounistiki Ananeosi 6* (May 1979), p. 7.
- 31 *Enimerosi-Dialogos*, vol. 2, April 1978, cover page.
- 32 «Η κατάληψη του Φυσικού» (The occupation of the physics department), *Rixi*, February 1980, p. 24.
- 33 «Σχολείο και Πολιτική» (School and Politics), *Touvla*, May 1981, p. 5.
- 34 Giannis Floros, «Το κίνημα των Καταλήψεων», (The occupations movement), *Agonas gia tin Kommounistiki Ananeosi*, February 1980, p. 25; «Προβλήματα και προοπτικές», *Rixi*, February 1980, p. 69.
- 35 There are many indications: the surge in the number of rock bands, of bars and pubs playing rock music as well as in the number of magazines and radio shows dedicated to this music genre. For more data, see: Nikos Bozinis, *Ροκ παγκοσμιότητα και ελληνική τοπικότητα. Η κοινωνική ιστορία του ροκ στις χώρες καταγωγής του και στην Ελλάδα* (Rock globality and Greek locality. The social history of rock in its countries of origin and in Greece), Athens: Nefeli, 2007; Nikolaos Papadogiannis, "Rock Music and the Making of Communist Youth Identities in Greece in the late 1970s", in T. Brown, L. Anton (eds), *Between the Avant Garde and the Everyday: Subversive Politics in Europe, 1958–2008*, New York: Berghahn Books, forthcoming 2009.
- 36 Nikos Bozinis, *Ροκ παγκοσμιότητα*, Athens: Nefeli, 2007, p. 200.
- 37 «Στιγμιότυπα από τις Καταλήψεις. Ο ΟΦΗ, οι σκούπες και ο λαβύρινθος» (Moments of the occupations. OFH, the brooms and the labyrinth), *Thourios*, 16 January 1980; «Θέλετε να με καταπιείτε αλλά θα σας κάτσω σο στομάχι» (You want to swallow me, but I will damage your stomach), *Aythaireta*, 1 May 1980.
- 38 This association was located both in written and in oral sources. For the former sources, see: Basantis, «Ο λόγος», p. 55. See also the interview with E. Q. and B. Q., Athens, 29 October 2007.
- 39 See Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*. London: Verso, 1987. For a good mapping of the field, regarding the approaches to consumer cultures, see: Hugh Mackay, "Introduction", in: Hugh Mackay (ed.), *Consumption and Everyday Life*, London: Sage, 1997;

Frank Trentmann, "Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption", *Journal of Contemporary History* 39/3 (2004): 373-401

40 Kornetis, "Student Resistance", p. 239.

41 See «θέλετε να με καταπιείτε αλλά θα σας κάτσω στο στομάχι» (You want to swallow me, but I will damage your stomach), *Aythaireta*, 1 May 1980. An approach towards rock that deviates from a cultural policy that aims at imposing certain behaviour patterns is also evident in «Λέσχες-Σύλλογοι» (Clubs-cultural societies), in *Aythaireta*, 1 May 1980, where it is argued that, in the Kallithea club, participants gather to listen to rock music, but not in order to "help us confront tanks".

42 «Για μια αγωνιστική, πολύμορφη, μαζική διέξοδο στις διαθέσεις της νεολαίας. Από το πρίσμα των αποφάσεων της Γ΄ Συνόδου του ΚΣ της ΚΝΕ» (For a militant, polymorphous, mass vent for the youth. From the perspective of the decisions of the third conference of the KNE central council), *Odigitis*, 1 February 1980, p. 2.

43 «Γαλλικός Μάης-Ιούνης '68: Άλλαξε πολλά πράγματα στη ζωή της νεολαίας» (The French May-June '68: many changes in the life of youth), *Odigitis*, 16 May 1980, pp. 11-12 and «Μεγάλη ταξική σύγκρουση της σύγχρονης ποχής: συζήτηση για το γαλλικό Μάη» (Great class struggle of the contemporary age: discussion about May '68), *Odigitis*, 16 May 1980, p. 12 (part A) and *Odigitis*, 23 May 1980, pp. 11-12 (part B).

44 Andreas Nefeloudis, «Αμφισβήτηση και οργάνωση» (Challenging and organisation), *Thourios*, 17 April 1980.