

# Hellenic students commemorate deaths

by Demetra Koutsouki-Koskinas, Effie Kapotas and Kostas Koskinas  
 Thursday marks the tenth anniversary of the massacre of students at Athens Polytechnic in Greece.

The Hellenic Students' Association is commemorating the event tonight at 7:00 pm. in SUB Theatre.

The massacre of the students followed their seizure of the Polytechnic to protest the military junta that was at that time in power in Greece.

The pro-U.S. Junta had come to power through a coup in 1967, overthrowing an elected government. Dissatisfaction with the regime had been growing ever since. By 1972 demonstrations and strikes were widespread.

Students and the intelligentsia were demanding more freedom.

In 1973 the Junta published a constitutional program but the students were not satisfied and the struggle escalated.

One of the protesters, Belloyiannis, was the subject for Picaso's famous painting "Man with the Carnation". Another, member of Parliament named Lambrakis was the central character of Costas Gavras' film, "Z".

On February 14th the first student demonstration of the year was held and the demands were both educational and political. It began in the Polytechnic school but it was severely put down by the police who brutally struck down students as well as professors. The Dean resigned in protest.

On February 22-23, 1973, 4,000 students seized the Law School for 48 hours. The Junta retaliated by drafting the male law students.

On March 16 the students in Medicine seized their building. By this time demonstrations had spread throughout the country. There were also new forces entering the anti-Junta fight: the democratic military, workers and farmers over the entire country were being mobilized.

The colonels were forced to promise a greater, but still inadequate, amount of liberty. They condemned the monarchy, extended an amnesty to many political prisoners, gave a limited freedom of the press and promised pseudo-elections. These measures failed to win over the people, and the students — who were attempting to select truly representative leaders — continued to organize.

On the fourth of November,

100,000 people demonstrated their anti-Junta sympathies at the gravesite of George Papandreou, the deceased leader of the Centrist Party who symbolized to the Greeks the spirit of democratization. The climate of dissatisfaction and outright protest was reaching its climax.

The 13th of November students, after a series of general assemblies conducted in the various schools, decided to siege the Polytechnic school. The seizure would serve a dual purpose: it would demonstrate popular protest; and it would serve as a vehicle for a reply to the American backed military regime.

Within the first two days the "free and besieged" students organized life within the gates of the school. They set up a radio station to communicate with the people and in this way they brought 200,000 people to congregate in front of the gates. Their cries of "Down with the Junta", "Yankees go home," and "Down with the Fascists" echoed in the streets of Athens.

By November 16 at 3:30 pm., the siege's organizing committee issued a manifesto to Greek and foreign journalists. Its content was clearly political: it demanded the immediate resignation of the Jun-

ta. By 6:30 pm., November 17, the demonstrations had spread throughout Athens. The police began to shoot blindly into crowds and throw cylinders of tear gas to disperse them.

The radio station was issuing instructions and information concerning the direction and outcome of the battle while, at the same time, it encouraged the combatants.

The first casualties, both dead and injured, were brought into the Polytechnic school where a makeshift hospital had been established. Had the injured been taken to regular hospitals there would have been waiting for them not doctors but police.

The Junta sent in tanks at 8:30 pm. The orders: shoot to kill. The radio station announced, "People of Greece — immediately outside our gates are tanks which are aimed directly at your children. Now you can understand how fully we have been compromised by the United States."

The students and supporters met the tanks with the cry: "We are brothers and sisters — people and soldiers united". Many of the soldiers refused to obey orders and some of them were executed. Paid mercenaries took over

abandoned battle stations and by 3:00 am. one tank had trampled the gate to the Polytechnic school. The gates became flooded with mercenaries and loyal police who shot with hatred and barbarism, and the terraces adjacent to the school were manned by snipers.

Demonstrations continued throughout the following day. The chief colonel, Papadopoulos, was forced to resign but nothing was really changed. The puppet regime of Papadopoulos was replaced by that of Ioannides. The continuing demonstrations served to confirm the notion that the Junta was not infallible.

Mass arrests not only continued but escalated. This signified the beginning of the end for the Junta. It was overthrown in July of 1974. But before its fall it managed to accomplish a major aim of American interests in the Aegean — the Turkish invasion of Cyprus.

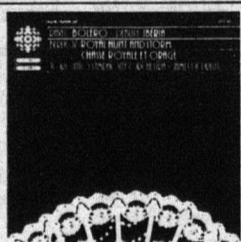
Aside from the tangible and intangible damage caused by the Junta — the corpses, the tortured, the economic dependence — was something more important. It taught the mass of Greek people that only through united action could they achieve something. Indeed, the worst ordeals would only be overcome through a united mass with common goals.

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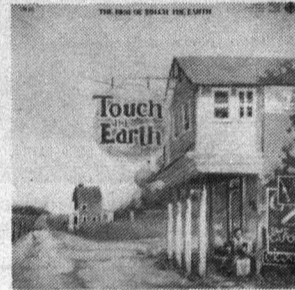
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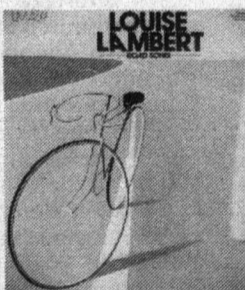
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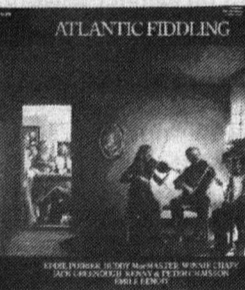
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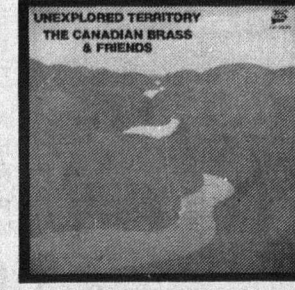
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