

History of Greek Anarchism Series

ANARCHISTS AND RADICALS IN 1890's PATRAS.*

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In 1893 Socialistiki Adelfotita (Socialist Brotherhood) founded in Patras, which was not a coherent organisation, but a loose grouping of some socialists and progressives, many of whom were friends and followers of the famous Greek socialist of this time Plato Drakoulis. For some historians, Socialist Brotherhood was allegedly a continuation of the Democratic Club in 1870s.

Brotherhood's president was Vasilis Doudoumis (a lawyer who among other things, wrote some revolutionary poems), secretary was the teacher Charilaos Dimitropoulos, and one of the leading figures of the organisation was also the architect Aristotle Thales, who originally came from Alexandria, Egypt.

Apart from Plato Drakoulis' followers, such as V. Doudoumis (who was a classmate of Drakoulis in High School of Patras), members of the Brotherhood were also supporters of the other famous socialist of the time Stavros Kallergis (based in Athens) and some anarchists, such as the well-educated and excellent connoisseur of anarchist ideas and European social movements of his time Giannis Magkanaras, who settled in Patras, probably a few years before, coming from Corinth.

Of those, some were intellectuals, and a small number were tradesmen and laborers. However, as we said earlier, Socialist Brotherhood was not a coherent organisation and the various ideological trends within it fought constantly among themselves.

The fact that Giannis Magkanaras was connected with the Socialist Brotherhood proved by his reports on the activities of this organisation published in the socialist newspaper "O Metarrythmistis" ("The Reformer") in which he either worked as an editor or co-operated. This newspaper firstly published in 1893 in Athens by George Dimopoulos when he left Sosialistikos Syndesmos (Socialist Society) led by Stavros Kallergis.

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Also, Giannis Magkanaras seems that co-operated with the newspaper “Sosialistikos Syllogos” (“Socialist Association”). This firstly published also in 1893 in Athens as a mouthpiece of Kentrikos Sosialistikos Syllogos (Central Socialist Society) which in turn was the product of one of the splits in this organisation (that is Socialist Society). In the same paper of Central Socialist Society some anarchists participated such as Evangelos Markantonatos or other militants influenced by anarchist ideas such as Alexandros Matiatos.

Socialist Brotherhood’s prime and foremost interest was the union movement and it was by their initiative that the first labor unions founded in Patras, as mentioned years later by the then anarchist Dimitris Karampiliias in his memoirs (in late 1940s and early 1950s). Several members of the Brotherhood were, simultaneously, members of these unions.

The organisation, other than their mutual nature, aimed to educate local people and workers to the ideals of socialism and because there was not a proper meeting space for the monthly gatherings and lectures they used the room of an elementary school in St. George Square, for which Dimitris Karampiliias wrote in one of his later articles (published as a memoir in the newspaper “Simerini” (“Today” of Patras, in 30 April 1950).

As mentioned before, at the same time the first labor unions founded in the city of Patras and the surrounding region. According to leading marxist historian Gianis Kordatos, the first union was this of shoe makers founded in 1894. According to T. Constantine the first union founded in Patras in 1893 and it was the Syndesmos Ton En Patras Ypallilon “E Enosis” (Association of Employees of Patras “The Union”). However, Dimitris Karampiliias indicates that the first trade union was this of the timber workers founded in 1894 by the initiative of Socialist Brotherhood. Other unions formed at the same time and they were those of the sultana boxes makers, tobacco workers and cigarette makers announcing strikes in which Socialist Brotherhood played a leading role. In October 1895, the shoe makers went on strike with economic and wage demands, but the State responded by arrests. Socialist Brotherhood reached 500 members in 1895 from 140 in 1893.

At the same time hard-core socialistic-spiritualist trends begun to appear, while at the end of 1894 Socialist Brotherhood published the newspaper “To Fos” (“The Light”) where the organisation among the other things supported Plato Drakoulis as a local candidate for the elections of 1895. The announcement of the publication of “To Fos” was published in the daily mainstream newspaper “Peloponnese”, in Tuesday, 28 February

1895.

After the publication of "To Fos", in August of the same year, another newspaper appeared in Patras under the same title and subtitle "Electoral newspaper published by independent citizens. Distributed free of charge". This newspaper supported conservative local politician Kanakaris in the elections.

However, Plato Drakoulis failed to be elected. The anarchists who were members of the organisation and some supporters of Stavros Kallergis disagreed strongly with the participation in elections and organised a separate anti-electoral campaign. Since then, the organisation became torn by internal conflicts between the three trends: a) Drakoulis supporters, b) Stavros Kallergis followers and c) anarchists.

Stavros Kallergis himself during the formation of socialist groups of his direct influence in various cities and towns of Greece, had a strong group of supporters in Patras as well, while many Socialist Brotherhood members were either subscribers or recipients of his newspaper "Sosialistis" ("Socialist"). Thus, as a result of the internal conflicts within the Brotherhood, in 2 June 1894 a group of members left the organisation and founded Sosialistiki Leshi Patron (Socialist Club of Patras) a group controlled directly by Kallergis. As founders of the new organisation appeared K. Kipourgos, A. Vassilopoulos, P. Evangelidis, G. Valsamakis, Achilles Orphanides and others.

At the same time, we have also the forming of "Armageddon", which expressed christian-socialist beliefs with some strong libertarian leanings. Main figures were John Arnellos (a physico-mathematician and philosopher, brother of local anarchist Dimitris Arnellos), lawyer Vasilis Theodoridis (who was closer of all to the anarchist ideas), doctor of Literature Athanassios Christogiannopoulos, entrepreneur Sotiris Kyriazopoulos and lawyer Theodore Kapetanos.

The members of "Armageddon" were touring and teaching social christianity, attending peasant rallies and organizing various events. They published a weekly newspaper with the same title. The Greek State repressed them brutally by arresting and imprisoned them mainly A. Christogiannopoulos and John Arnellos. However some of them continued their activity until around 1910.

In Patras another similar group with "Armageddon" was the "Christianiki Isopoliteia" ("Christian Egalitarianism"), whose leader was Dimitris Andreopoulos or Katsivelos (1871-1947), who was also one of the pioneers in establishing trade unions and

workers' clubs, and played an important role in establishing Ergatiko Kentro of Patras (Trades Hall of Patras) in 1906 of whom he was the president for many years.

Vasilis Theodoridis was the only member of "Armageddon" who later have been associated actively with the anarchist newspaper-group "Epi Ta Proso" ("Forward") and participated in various struggles and mobilizations by the peasants, been either motivated by the anarchists of the city or started spontaneously, while later he participated in the anarchist group and newspaper "Neon Fos" ("New Light") of Pyrgos.

In January 1896 under the initiative of anarchists Constantine C. Stavropoulos, Panagiotis Kotzias and Dimitris Karampilias a strong in numbers but loosely organised anarchist faction formed within Socialist Brotherhood – which by then due to the internal conflicts was in a state of dissolution. This faction sought to continue the Brotherhood's educational work among the workers and began publishing the weekly newspaper "Empros" ("Forward"). This newspaper was much more anarchist in its contents than "To Fos", but after the intervention of conservative local MP George Papadiamantopoulos stopped its circulation in the third issue.

However, this loose anarchist faction laid the groundwork for a closer association between the anarchists and the various workers' circles, especially those who belonged to the sultana boxes makers' union with whom they formed the Socialistiko Kentro (Socialist Centre). This anarchist faction had about 40 members.