

Athens Polytechnic uprising



The Athens Polytechnic uprising in 1973 was a massive demonstration of popular rejection of the Greek military junta of 1967-1974. The uprising began on November 14, 1973, escalated to an open anti-junta revolt and ended in bloodshed in the early morning of November 17 after a series of events starting with a tank crashing through the gates of the Polytechnic.

The causes

Greece had been, since April 21, 1967, under the dictatorial rule of the military, a regime which abolished civil rights, dissolved political parties and exiled, imprisoned and tortured politicians and citizens based on their political beliefs.

The causes

On February 21, 1973, law students went on strike and barricaded themselves inside the buildings of the Law School of the University of Athens in the centre of Athens. The police were ordered to intervene and many students were reportedly subjected to police brutality. The events at the Law School are often cited as the prelude to the Polytechnic uprising.



The events

On November 14, 1973 students at the Athens Polytechnic (Polytechneion) went on strike and started protesting against the military regime. As the authorities stood by, the students, barricaded themselves in and constructed a radio station that repeatedly broadcast across Athens:

"Here is Polytechneion! People of Greece, the Polytechneion is the flag bearer of our struggle and your struggle, our common struggle against the dictatorship and for democracy!"

The events



In the early hours of November 17, 1973, the transitional government sent a tank crashing through the gates of the Athens Polytechnic. In unclear footage clandestinely filmed by a Dutch journalist, the tank is shown bringing down the main steel entrance to the campus to which people were clinging.

The events

Documentary evidence also survives, in recordings of the "Athens Polytechnic" radio transmissions from the occupied premises.

In these a young man's voice is heard desperately asking the soldiers (whom he calls 'brothers in arms') surrounding the building complex to disobey the military orders and not to fight 'brothers protesting'.

The voice carries on to an emotional outbreak, reciting the lyrics of the Greek National Anthem, until the tank enters the yard, at which time transmission ceases.

The events



The records of the trials held following the collapse of the Junta document the circumstances of the deaths of many civilians during the uprising, In addition, hundreds of civilians were left injured during the events.

