



Caffeinated

By Giorgos "Derek" Vrachliotis

Congratulations suckers!
You succeeded in making me flee this shithole.
In other words, a short introduction to the Greek higher education system.

The basic idea...

... or at least what it once used to be.

The basic idea behind the Greek universities is the idea of “free exchange of ideas”. In 17 Nov. ‘74 and about a year before the fall of the 7 years long dictatorship a tank invaded the Polytechnic university of Athens trying to disperse a protest against the dictatorship held by the students that have occupied the campus. Up until that moment the students were being protected by the “educational asylum” that prevented the police from entering the campus and interfering with the free exchange of ideas. Obviously laws have nothing to do with illegitimate governments. The legitimate governments that followed the dictatorship being alarmed by that event and in an effort to prevent that from ever happening again in the future and in an effort in to strengthen this “free exchange of ideas” ideal strengthened “the asylum” making it practically impossible for the police to... police any academic establishment.

-So, what went wrong?

-How about... everything!

In the ‘80s along with the strengthening of the asylum came the second and most decisive blow to the Greek universities. The “who calls the shots” law. This law brought all the elective power to the student body. From then on the students were the only ones responsible for the election of the dean and the rest of the “governing body” of the school. The system is quite simple actually, the students as a whole elect their representatives and then the representatives elect the dean and the rest of the “governing body”. However according to the modern Greek customs that were mostly established during the ‘80s no real control or constrain measures were established, leading to an uncontrollable corruption frenzy lasting of course until today.

-So what happens today?

-well... mostly nothing!

From the ‘75 “restoration of the republic” elections since today all the candidates elected to govern this country had an “end corruption” slogan in their platform. Of course the corruption never ended, it only grew stronger and bigger by the time and proved itself of being above parties, ideologies and “colors”. What does this have to do with Greek universities? Everything obviously! Every time someone tried to set things right the corrupted students and teachers would convince the rest of the non corrupted students that the proposed laws would somehow harm the university. Then it was just a matter of hours before a group of students occupied the school and basically shutting it all down until the end of the semester or even the whole year. As you probably realize this whole attitude is not exactly the most constructive or progressive one.

Latest incidents.

Autumn 2005-Summer 2006

During the last autumn one of the most ambitious efforts to end the current status begun. It begun with a few vague statements by the current education minister soon to be followed by some official governmental and parliamentary discussions, a great deal of rumors and a moderate (at first) wave of reaction and strikes. Later on, after the last christmas a greater deal of information regarding this upcoming bill started to leak to the public causing even further reactions, strikes and shut down schools. Keep in mind that until June '06 no official bill was actually brought to the public view. The strike wave that begun in Dec. '05 had managed to shut down almost all Greek universities by the end of June '06. Please try to visualize that, almost all Greek universities being shut down because of protests held against RUMORS! Later on when the actual bill was presented everyone was able to see the success of all these protests, the bill was nothing like the rumors or the ministers original(?) intentions as stated in earlier press conferences. This also teaches as a great deal about how all the modern Greek governments... govern, but I will save that for a later article.
