



**A DAY WHEN NOTHING IS CERTAIN  
WRITINGS ON THE GREEK INSURRECTION**

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This pamphlet is a collection of some of the best writings to come out of the Greek insurrection of 2008. It includes communiqués written by comrades during the upheaval itself as well as articles written in the months after the fires died out (although the struggle never went away).

The following text was prepared as an introduction to the unfolding situation in Greece to be read aloud at a public meeting in St. Louis, Missouri. The meeting was organized in response to a call by Greek anarchists for a day of international solidarity on Saturday, December 13 2008. That day saw solidarity actions across the world ranging from banner drops and graffiti to riots and bombings. We are reproducing the text here as a record of some of the many voices that began to speak during the generalized rioting and rebellion that rocked Greece during the winter of 2008.

The communiqués, some written from within occupied buildings during the insurrection, are several of the most inspiring and emotional texts produced by the Greek insurgents. They are powerful, not just because of the weight of their words, but also because of the context in which they were produced – that of the opening up of a horizon of possibility.

Also included are two texts by the Greek group TPTG. The first is a description of some of the more noteworthy moments of the December events (*Like a winter with a thousand Decembers*), and the second is a more in depth study of the forces involved in shaping the course of that rebellion and others which may come (*The rebellious passage of a proletarian minority through a brief period of time*).

Let us never forget that revolt is real, not merely the subject of history, but a living, breathing memory waiting for us to give it form. The terrain to be acted upon is not the geography of some far away land, but the substance of our very lives.

*For the subversion of the reigning social order and the creation of lives truly worth living.*

*On the night of December 6th, police shoot 15-year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos in cold blood in the Exarchia district of Athens. On the same night, up to 10,000 people take the streets of Athens in a spontaneous demonstration, burning and smashing banks, ministries and multinational shops. Ever since, the tension increasingly escalates: universities are occupied, as are most of the high schools in the country. Barricades are being put up around Athens; clashes with the police are constant.*

What follows is a collection of personal testimony from on the ground in Greece.

### *Sunday, December 7*

Ermou Street, the main shopping road in Athens is burned down. A large five story mall is completely burnt. These are not - and could not be, given the magnitude of the 'misdeeds' - the acts of the 'anarchists' doing their thing. Of course anarchists are on the front lines everywhere, but these acts are social. It's not just about the murder or the state repression: there's a growing feeling of revolt, against the economy, against the poverty, against the lost jobs that had to break out somehow.

Although violent scenes are not uncommon in Greece the extent, duration and intensity of the riots seems to have taken the authorities by surprise. In addition the fact that many of those who take part in protest marches are neither young nor students is indicative of the fact that the death of the teenager has angered many Greeks. Case in point was the pensioner, who stood in front of a phalanx of riot police, apoplectic with rage shouting, "cops, killers, pigs" during a march in Thessaloniki.

In Hamburg and Berlin spontaneous solidarity demonstrations take to the streets. In Dresden a courthouse has its windows broken.

### *Monday, December 8*

There are clashes on the main streets of Athens. Tens of shops are on fire. A gun shop in the central square of Omonia, in Athens, has been looted. Every high school in Greece is occupied by the students. No school for the next three days. The students keep on coming from every district...

It's getting out of hand, to the point that the insurrectionists can't restrain 15 year old masked up teenagers (in the thousands, unorganized and with insufficient 'ammo') from attacking the cops. Soon the kids learn, and organize together with the others. One sees 'retired' radicals from the 80's, again with the balaclava and the steel bar - the "path of fire" as the expression goes.

The riot policemen are also getting frustrated, this means more uncontrolled violence from them - they throw back stones or beat up high school children. Last night some riot squads used up all their tear gas and got beaten by the mob.

The centre of Athens and Salonica are battlegrounds. Sometimes things calm down. Today, a lady gave us food from her balcony. In Exarchia it has been reported that people were throwing pottery vases from their balconies onto the riot squads. Yesterday some anarchists went from an occupied university roof to the roofs of buildings on the same block, and went on to throw petrol bombs from the roofs of 8 story apartment buildings.

A university general assembly from Patras just voted for the "violent overthrow of the government."

'Bring it down brother!' a grandpa encourages some anarchos in front a jewelry shop window. It's insurrection baby.

The Greek consulates in Berlin and London have been occupied since the early morning. In Berlin some 30 people entered the building and replaced the Greek flag with a red-and-black flying at half-mast. The Greek consulate in the city of Hanover is occupied as well. Solidarity demonstrations occur throughout Germany.

### *Tuesday, December 9*

Alexandros' funeral will take place at 3pm today in Athens. It is expected that the funeral will turn into an anti-police protest. There is no public mass-callout for it, but people will be making their way there in large numbers.

Demonstrations have been called for this morning in cities across the country, including Thessaloniki, Chalkida, Aigion, Kozani, Mytilini and Patras. This is all ahead of tomorrow's general strike, when demonstrations will be taking place in all major cities.

*"Every single, and I mean every single shop in the centre of Athens is damaged or destroyed. It is war, don't you see? This is war."*

And so it begins. The biggest string of riots the country has seen in its post-dictatorship era. No one has any way to predict what can happen from here on. Even for Greece, a country with high levels of violence in political demonstrations, this is terra incognita. No-one has been here before. No-one has come straight from three days of unprecedented rioting onto a fourth and a fifth that is sure to follow tomorrow. And no-one can possibly imagine just how things will calm down after that.

The police have already lost control. Trapped between trying to avoid a second (surely catastrophic) death yet equipped with the single technique they possess in handling the demonstrators – sheer violence. The government, a sorry get-together of talking heads on the TV, is locked up in meeting rooms, one emergency cabinet meeting after the other. A dead government standing. The question is not if – the question is just how it will fall.

In Patras, the furious demonstrators besieged the main police station only hours after the assassination. The following day, a well-known local poet, now in his fifties, walked up to the police station, alone. He calmly opened his bag and, one after the other, lit and threw his Molotov cocktails. A new form of poetry?

There's a semi-chaotic situation here, fertile and dangerous. People act almost too courageously - foolishly sometimes. In some cases the so called 'insurrectionists' have to bring better 'rhythm' to the unorganized attackers. We advance when we impose our rhythm on the cops. The solidarity on the street is quite intense.

Reports keep coming about some small town with no organized radicals whatsoever where 20 masked youth attacked the police station with 10 petrol bombs. This is happening every night. Demos are taking place in

almost every city. In Athens during the demonstrations themselves, there are autonomous attacks on banks in different areas of the city.

The universities are closed down by the authorities but they are de facto occupied by the rioters, and act as a gathering place, a place to heal from the tear gas or to make more projectiles.

The university teachers are useless. The general trade unions are useless. Most 'far left' groups are useless. They appeal for a return to normality, a return to law and order.

In Thessaloniki and Athens, what could be burned in the city center, has pretty much burned down. Few banks and state buildings are left.

We know that the rioters are getting more proletarian-based and multi-racial, so to speak: there is looting in proletarian areas independent from the demonstrations and the prisoners have started a 24 hour abstention from meals in solidarity. Last night was the most intense so far. We'll see how this develops.

### ***It's the party of insurrection vs. the party of law and order...***

Toward the end of a demonstration in Patras, the riot police launch a major attack. Soon thereafter, tens of fascists attack the demonstration with knives and stones. Co-coordinating perfectly with the police, they continue their attack and, according to some reports, even make joint arrests. The demonstrators are confronted with the unbelievable spectacle of a group of people throwing police-issued tear gas while chanting "blood-honor-golden dawn". The demonstration is completely torn apart; people are chased all the way into their flats; while the cops and Nazis smash their windows and try to force entry.

The feeling of being on the streets in Athens is one I have never felt before – a feeling that you need to have a clear reason to be out: *For the uprising or against it* – but definitely one of the two. At the grounds of the National Technical University of Athens, a good 2,000 people quite clearly show who it is we are fighting with. An absolutely crazy mix of punks, migrants, junkies and anarchists lined up across the street dancing, drinking and waiting for the riot police to come.

A few hundred meters away, at the grounds of the University of Economics, a 400-500 person assembly is taking place, the subject being the anarchist presence at tomorrow's general strike.

Reports have started coming in that fascist groups are making appearances in the area. One male (a migrant) and one woman have been stabbed tonight. This after we heard about the incredible course of events in Patras. Combining the two, it becomes quite clear: The "official" Greek state has reached its limit in dealing with the revolts. Monday's riots were simply out of the police's capacity for control. This is the time for its informal forces to kick in: the fascists.

This is not a time to panic, of course – we have so many new allies on our side that if we play this properly the fascists won't dare strike again. Zefyri, in the outskirts of the city, is one of the most deprived neighborhoods of Athens, with a large Roma population. At about 10pm tonight, a crowd of around six hundred besieged the police station, attacking it with Molotov cocktails while a flaming car was driven toward the building.

Tomorrow's general strike is absolutely crucial. People have to fight four days of tiredness; the sold-out trade unions that have turned the demonstration into a static gathering (to prevent mobility of the crowd and make it easier to control); the police running amok – and now the fascists too. Things are going to be far from easy, but there is no other way to get rid of those images from the past.

I just walked down Mesogeion avenue (far from the city centre) and a small group of students, 12-13 years old, are attacking a riot police van. They are just armed with stones but they're totally going for it! Elsewhere, riot police threw tear gas at people sitting in cafeterias and those people attacked them in response. Mainstream media carry fresh reports this morning that the government has decided to declare a state of emergency on Thursday, should the rioting not end by then.

The Greek consulate in Paris is occupied in solidarity with the Greek revolt. More demonstrations occur throughout Germany with street battles and trashed banks.

## *Wednesday, December 10*

### **The day of the general strike**

High School students join the trade union march in Athens. They pelt riot police with stones and paint. In the suburb of Kaisariani the school students attack the local police station. Meanwhile, a group of anarchists attack the central courts while inside Alexandros' murderer is appearing before the prosecutor. The court's control room and a media van are set on fire with petrol bombs.

Solidarity demonstrations are held in San Francisco and New York City. In the early morning hours, a brick is thrown through a window of the Greek consulate in New York City. Graffiti on the front of the building reads, "Alexis was here." In Bristol, over 30 police vehicles, both marked and unmarked, are attacked by anarchists with catapults. Two sites are targeted and extensive damage done. More demonstrations across Europe.

## *Thursday, December 11*

The police station of Korydallos in Athens is attacked with Molotov cocktails and stones. 700 students remain near a road leading to the local prison; there are clashes outside at least another six police stations in the capital.

Mainstream media report that at this point 10 major roads in Athens are blocked off by high school students. Reports come in, one after the other, of university departments being occupied by their students. Also, 25 police stations are besieged across Athens, with heavy clashes at some. Greek news is reporting that more than 4500 tear gas canisters have been thrown by the police. Their supplies are running out and more are being ordered from abroad. Plans are made to block the incoming shipments.

A kid of their age was assassinated. They took the streets to protest only to have tear gas thrown at them, to be violently arrested, to be shot at. Yet hour by hour, day by day, the school students on the streets become more militant and determined.

Yesterday in the suburb of Petroupoli, around 100 of them attacked the local police station, smashing it up with sticks and stones. A few banks down the same road were also attacked. As of last night at least 100 schools in the country were occupied by their students. Today, the students are planning decentralized road blockades across Athens. For tomorrow, demonstrations have been called by university students in Athens and Thessaloniki - universities are also expected to be occupied in large numbers today and tomorrow. The Economics University anarchist occupation has decided to reach out to the students; newspapers, posters and leaflets are being printed right now, to be distributed to schools across the city.

A solidarity demonstration is held in Olympia, Washington. The Bank of America gets bricked. A march of about 150 people in Copenhagen leads to 32 arrests after demonstrators throw bottles and paint bombs at police and buildings. In Moscow, the Greek consulate is attacked with a Molotov cocktail. Solidarity actions occur in Madrid where there is an attack against the Municipal Police Department, several police are injured. In Barcelona a demonstration with some 800 people ends in confrontations between the demonstrators and the regional police force. Demonstrations also occur in Montreal, Turkey, Italy, and the Netherlands. Authorities fear rioting will spread around the globe.

## *Friday, December 12*

In Athens intense rioting continues today. Greek youths hurl rocks and Molotov cocktails at riot police, who respond with stun grenades and tear gas; protesters shatter windows just replaced days ago. Protesters also smash their way into the main branch of the National Bank of Greece, sending employees fleeing in panic. A municipal building in the northwestern city of Ioannina is also occupied.

In Thessaloniki, things are calming for now as far as direct clashes go. But things widen up on other levels. There were student demos in the morning, and a large demo in districts away from the burned-up city centre was called by an 'informal' assembly comprised of people from different social strata, anarchists and radicals, some 200 people or so.

It was decided that there would be no breaking this time, and surprisingly enough it was so, apart from destroying surveillance cameras. An appropriate action that prepares the ground for other actions.

Students continue to gather autonomously outside police stations and attack them with stones. There are impromptu demonstrations of 200-300 students everywhere. Actions have been dispersed – we are no longer confronting dozens or hundreds of riot squads but instead we are attacking in districts and local areas. During official demos other groups attack banks or police stations. This is good, we are becoming more intelligent and eloquent, without leaving the confrontational stage.

The army forces are on yellow alert. Some leftists organizing in the army have declared that they will not accept any command to attack demonstrators.

There's no such a thing as a too extremist action in Greece right now. Almost anything is accepted.

Last night, something out of the ordinary and by general consensus very important took place in the occupied city hall of St. Dimitrios. With only a few hours to make it known, some 300 persons from every age and social stratum responded to our call. Many matters were openly discussed, such as the self-organization of the struggle, the clashes with the cops, the deeper causes of this social revolt, our perspectives, the problems immigrants face, the jobless, everyone. After the first speeches, it became obvious that the intention of the people to use this opportunity to put our lives in our own hands, after many years of defeatism, was something not only possible, but urgent.

The usual myths that the media continue to spread have been torn down at once under the applauses of people who are talking about everything that is happening, without condemning any tendency of those in struggle, albeit expressing their thoughts or disagreements. Experiences of older people who took part in past social revolts were communicated, also expressing their self-critique about what these previous revolts ended up being. The gathered declared that it's within our grasp to avoid making the same mistakes again, and that we are able to achieve more than we can imagine.

There were proposals for actions, like continuing the popular assembly on a permanent basis, starting Greek lessons for immigrants, and many more. For today it was decided that the occupation will continue, and we demand the removal of every charge from all arrested in the last few days.

The police station of Petroupoli was besieged for more than seven hours and its facade was entirely burnt by Molotov cocktails. 3 students were arrested but the crowd succeeded in demanding their release, as happened a bit later when another two students were arrested only to be released again, under the pressure of the people in solidarity outside.

In the early hours, anarchists occupied the mainstream radio station Flash FM, broadcasting their messages for more than half an hour.

Friends call from abroad. "Is it over?" we can only laugh at that idea - What do you mean, is it over? It's just about to start. "Is this over?" How, exactly, could it be? The murderer of Alexandros shows no remorse and is about to get away with it. The pigs keep provoking. Their political leaders remain unpunished. What single argument, what single reason is there for us to return to normalcy, to forget, to retreat from the streets? None. *There is no way back now.*

The student demonstration in Athens is large, at least 5-6,000. The high school kids are an amazing spectacle to watch. They chant "shoot us too!". We are approaching the parliament now. We charge at the cops. They respond with a fuckload of tear gas. People hold. More and more people arrive. There must be at least 10,000 of us.

The demo has ended and we have retreated to the three occupied universities, waiting for the pigs. Outside the law school a jeep is burning. They should be here soon. The riot cops approach the law school. They are pelted with stones and Molotov's, and retreat. One jeep and one riot cop on fire. The office of Alexis Kougiyas (the murderer's lawyer) is trashed.

Solidarity demonstrations and attacks take place in Poznan, Warsaw, Newcastle, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Brussels, Istanbul, Cyprus, Sofia, Bologna, Milan, Venice, Florence, Turin and Naples; as well as more in

Rostock, Sweden, Holland, Austria, Switzerland, Chile, Dublin, Zagreb, Wellington and Washington DC.

In Mexico City a police department is bombed. In Frankfurt a solidarity demo turns into a riot. Around 50 anarchists in Rome rampage after a demo at the Greek consulate. Police cars are attacked, banks smashed, bins put on fire. In Paris the Champs-Élysées is blocked by protestors, some ripping out street lights from the middle of the road as they move along. In Bordeaux cars are set alight outside the Greek consulate. In Santa Cruz two Banks of America and an ATM are attacked with stones.



*Top: German anarchists invade the Greek consulate in Berlin.*

*Left: Greek youth greet the entrance of riot police with a defiant gesture.*

# Communiqués from Occupied Territory

## THE PHANTOM OF LIBERTY ALWAYS COMES WITH A KNIFE BETWEEN THE TEETH

The *ne plus ultra* of social oppression is being shot at in cold blood.

All the stones, torn from the pavement and thrown at the shields of cops or at the façades of commercial temples, all the flaming bottles that traced their orbits in the night sky, all the barricades erected on city streets, dividing our areas from theirs, all the bins of consumer trash which, thanks to the fire of revolt, came to be *Something* out of *Nothing*, all the fists raised under the moon, are the arms giving flesh, as well as true power, not only to resistance but also to freedom. And it is precisely the feeling of freedom that, in those moments, remains the sole thing worth betting on: that feeling of forgotten childhood mornings, when everything may happen, for it is ourselves, as creative humans, who have awoken, not those future productive human machines known as *obedient subject, student, alienated worker, owner, family wo/man*. The feeling of facing the enemies of freedom - of no longer fearing them.

It is thus for good reason that those who wish to get on with their business as if nothing is happening, as if nothing has ever happened, are worried. The phantom of liberty always comes with a knife between the teeth, with the violent will to break the chains, all those chains that turn life into a miserable repetition, serving to reproduce the dominant social relations. Yet from Saturday, December 6, the cities of this country are not functioning properly: no shopping therapy, no open roads leading us to work, no news on the government's forthcoming recovery initiatives, no carefree switching from one reality TV show to another, no evening drives around Syntagma Square, etc., etc., etc.

These days and nights do not belong to merchants, TV commentators, ministers and cops: These days and nights belong to Alexis!

As surrealists we were on the streets from the start, along with thousands of others, in revolt and solidarity; for surrealism was born with the breath of the street, and does not intend to ever abandon it. After the mass resistance before the State murderers, the breath of the street has become even warmer, even more hospitable and creative than before. It is not in our competence to propose a general line to this movement. Yet we do assume our responsibility in the common struggle, as it is a struggle for freedom. Without having to agree with all aspects of such a mass phenomenon, without being partisans of blind hatred and of violence for its own sake, we accept that this phenomenon exists for a reason.

Let's not allow this flaming breath of poetry to loosen or die out.

Let's turn it into a concrete utopia: to transform the world and to transform life!

*No peace with cops and their masters!*

*All in the streets!*

*Those who cannot feel the rage may as well shut their traps!*

- Athens Surrealist Group, December 2008

## REALITY IS AN ILLUSION. NORMALITY IS BEYOND US.

During the last few days we have lived in a constant contradiction. Work during the mornings, "insurrection" at night. An insurrection triggered by the cold blooded murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos by the police. The murder and the explosion of reactions that followed were not accidental events. They were the catalyst that brought to the fore a situation whose conditions were formed some time ago.

These conditions have much to do with the economic situation, insurance deregulation, the education reforms and the intensification of our lives in every respect, the plundering of our space and time. And it's not just these conditions. The era of the first victories of the workers' movement isn't much different from our experience, with the actual annulment of basic work rights, the curtailment of personal freedoms, the attempt to turn society into a "fragmented puzzle" of insecurity, confusion, terror-hysteria and repression. The working rights of yesterday are becoming the object of dispute for today's struggles.

We are living in an era of the intensification of production, of elastic working conditions, the rejection of the collective spirit, and the glorification of individualism on every level. The loss of the workers' identity inside the production process is the logical outcome of the always intensifying demand of the boss for a worker-"chameleon", that adapts with ease to any condition of wage exploitation. An exploitation that doesn't shrink from legalizing workers who are in reality rented, from throwing the working force into a precarious workers' market. The more extreme part of this uninsured work is at large done by the immigrants.

Simultaneously, as workers we are called to pay for the economic crisis. A crisis that is mostly caused by our inability to exert a shining consuming behavior, while remaining docile to the commands of the bosses, and contented with the crumbs of a basic wage. And it's not just that. Not only do they steal our working power, they overwhelm us with tax-plundering to cover the deficits of a national budget that does not serve the interests of the workers. And while socially necessary working time is on the wane, our working hours keep growing in direct proportion to the rhythm that a stratum on the margins of society is growing and reproducing - the jobless. To summarize, to solidify the relationships of exploiters-exploited the illusion of a "common interest" is created, while in reality we all work for the interests of the boss.

The title of our text is not accidental. From the ashes of the last days' destructive spontaneity, we recognize the power of those "from below" to define the public sphere and create the social frame in which to function. We are not just the producers of social wealth, we are the social wealth itself. We are the ones who keep the cohesion in society and ensure its viability. As we acquire awareness of our power, we are becoming more dangerous than ever.

We propose:

Immediate blocking of the production process. Social wages regardless of occupation, to live in decency and to annul the separations promoted by the State and the Capital. Social insurance for all. Creation of poles of self-organized collective struggle in every working sector.

Against the bureaucratic syndicalism of the state "guild" that is GSEE-ADEDY.

Bring it down!

LET'S BUILD TODAY THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

*- Fellow precarious workers from the occupied ASOEE*



Mustachioed comrades ready to fight. A return to *the path of fire*, as the expression goes (!?)

## STATEMENT

On Saturday night, the Greek police assassinated a 15 year old student. His assassination was the straw that broke the camel's back.

It was the continuation of a coordinated action, by state terrorism and the Golden Dawn, which aimed at university and high school students (with the private universities first), at migrants that continue to be persecuted for being born with the wrong skin color, at the employees that must work to death without compensation.

The government of cover-ups with its praetors, having burnt the forests last summer, is responsible for all major cities burning now, too. It protected financial criminals, all those involved in the mobile phone interceptions scandal, those looting the employees' insurance funds, those kidnapping migrants, those who protected the banks and the monasteries that steal from the ordinary people.

We are in Civil War: with the fascists, the bankers, the state, the media wishing to see an obedient society.

There are no excuses, yet they once again try to use conspiracy theories to calm spirits down. The rage that had accumulated had to be expressed and should not, by any means, end. Throughout the world we are making headlines, it was about time that people rise up everywhere.

The generation of the poor, the unemployed, the partially employed, the homeless, the migrants, the youth, is the generation that will smash every display window and will wake up the obedient citizens from their sleep of the ephemeral American dream.

Don't watch the news, consciousness is born in the streets.

When the youth are murdered, the old people should not sleep.

Goodbye Alexandros, may your blood be the last of an innocent to run.

- *The occupied School of Theatre in Thessaloniki, December 9.*

## DAYS OF DEMOCRACY 2008

*EITHER WITH THE GUNS OF THE POLICE OR WITH THE STRUGGLES OF SOCIETY*

No insurrection in history could ever be controlled, manipulated, or submitted to ideologies or political parties and mechanisms, it could never be merely political in content. Every riot, every insurrection has always been a social affair and has thus been deeply political in the broadest sense. After the murder in cold blood of 15-year-old Alexandros, a tumult of rage and discontent has come to the surface. A wave of excluded, disappointed, repressed, desperate people flooded the streets, of diverse cultural backgrounds, education, experience and class and were united in the spontaneous cry of a society that is being suppressed, deprived of its future, that is watching its dreams being crushed. This is a generation that has been systematically excluded from any means of expression, deprived of any possibility to decide for itself at school, at the university or at work, through its growing alienation. This generation is choosing destruction as its own expression of rage and creativity. Rage is not just a feeling. It is a struggle for social justice. As long as there is no justice, there will be no social peace.

We are out on the streets as part of this society but also as part of this social rage. We do not seek to be the leaders of this discontent, we are not experts in violence. We are out on the streets because we are on Alexandros' side. Any one of us could have been in his position. We know well, from our everyday experience in social and labor struggles, in the struggles of immigrants for dignity, in the struggles of the marginalized and the prisoners for a glimpse of freedom, that the State and the institutions of power have always confronted us with their finger on the trigger.

We do not just feel hurt, outraged and revolted by the unjust death of a young person. We are also fully aware that, whether we are friends, parents or relatives, for each one of us and each of our beloved ones, there is a police bullet waiting for its fatal call. Guilty are the State and its uniformed murderers. It is they who are the true specialists and actual managers of violence.

They started it. They are the ones who are responsible for this wave of violence and insurrection that broke out with the murder of Alexandros. There was never justice for the murders of Koumis, Kanellopoulou, Kaltezas, Temboneras, Boulatovic, and of so many more immigrants... Social rage grows with State violence, chemical warfare on the streets (teargas cartridges shot directly at demonstrators), rubber bullets, beatings and hooded plainclothes policemen arresting demonstrators.

The explosive social situation these days could - and should - create the conditions and the consciences for a better future. But it could also create the conditions for accepting and legitimizing the use of firearms by the police. How else could we interpret the riot policeman in Athens waving a revolver against demonstrators during the demo on Sunday? How else could we interpret the numerous firings in the air by special-force policemen right after Alexandros' funeral? How else could we interpret knife-flogging fascists helping out the police during their attack against demonstrators in Patras on Tuesday evening?

However hidden from the majority, all the above-mentioned incidents are true.

NO MORE HYPOCRICY. THESE ARE NO "ISOLATED INCIDENTS" - THIS IS THE REALITY OF STATE VIOLENCE. COPS SHOOT TO KILL - WE ARE AT WAR.

Whoever pretends nothing is happening has already chosen which side they are on.

- *Occupied School of Theatre – Thessaloniki, December 9*



Students send a message to the true specialists and managers of violence: 'turn your guns around.'

## **WE ARE HERE. WE ARE EVERYWHERE. WE ARE AN IMAGE FROM THE FUTURE.**

*If I do not burn  
If you do not burn  
If we do not burn  
How will darkness come to light?*

- Nazim Hikmet, *Like Kerem*

Clenching fear in their teeth the dogs howl: Return to normality – the fools' feast is over. The philologists of assimilation have already started digging up their cut-sharp caresses:

*We are ready to forget, to understand, to exchange the promiscuity of these few days, but now behave or we shall bring over our sociologists, our anthropologists, our psychiatrists! Like good fathers we have tolerated with restraint your emotional eruption – now look at how desks, offices and shop windows gape empty! The time has come for a return, and whoever refuses this holy duty shall be hit hard, shall be sociologized, shall be psychiatrized.*

An injunction hovers over the city: "Are you at your post?" Democracy, social harmony, national unity and all the other big hearths stinking of death have already stretched out their morbid arms.

Power (from the government to the family) aims not simply to repress the insurrection and its generalization, but to produce a relation of subjectivation. A relation that defines bios, that is political life, as a sphere of cooperation, compromise and consensus. "Politics is the politics of consensus; the rest is gang-war, riots, chaos." This is a true translation of what they are telling us, of their effort to deny the living core of every action, and to separate and isolate us from what we can do: not to unite the two into one, but to rupture again and again the one into two. The mandarins of harmony, the barons of peace and quiet, law and order, call on us to become dialectic. But those tricks are desperately old, and their misery is transparent in the fat bellies of the trade-union bosses, in the washed-out eyes of the intermediaries, who like vultures

perch over every negation, over every passion for the real. We have seen them in May, we have seen them in LA and Brixton, and we have been watching them over the decades licking the long now white bones of the 1973 Polytechnic. We saw them again yesterday when instead of calling for a permanent general strike, they bowed to legality and called off the strike protest march. Because they know all too well that the road to the generalization of the insurrection is through the field of production – through the occupation of the means of production of this world that crushes us.

Tomorrow dawns a day when nothing is certain. And what could be more liberating than this after so many long years of certainty? A bullet was able to interrupt the brutal sequence of all those identical days. The assassination of a 15 year old boy was the moment when a displacement took place strong enough to turn the world upside down. A displacement from the seeing through of yet another day, to the point that so many think simultaneously: "That was it, not one step further, all must change and we will change it." The revenge for the death of Alex, has become the revenge for every day that we are forced to wake up in this world. And what seemed so hard proved to be so simple.

This is what has happened, what we have. If anything scares us it is the return to normality. For in the destroyed and pillaged streets of our cities of light we see not only the obvious results of our rage, but the possibility of starting to live. We no longer have anything to do other than to install ourselves in this possibility, transforming it into a living experience by grounding on the field of everyday life our creativity, our power to materialise our desires, our power not to contemplate but to construct the real. This is our vital space. All the rest is death.

Those who want to understand will understand. Now is the time to break the invisible cells that chain each and everyone to his or her pathetic little life. And this does not require solely or necessarily one to attack police stations and torch malls and banks. The time that one deserts his or her couch and the passive contemplation of his or her own life and takes to the streets to talk and to listen, leaving behind anything private, involves in the field of social relations the destabilizing force of a nuclear bomb. And this is precisely because the (till now) fixation of everyone on his or her microcosm is tied to the traction forces of the atom. Those forces that make the (capitalist) world turn. This is the dilemma: with the

insurgents or alone. And this is one of the very few times that a dilemma can be at the same time so absolute and so real.

*- Initiative from the occupation of the Athens School of Economics and Business 11/12/2008*



This year the holidays just won't be the same. Onlookers flee as the Christmas tree in central Athens is set alight.

## **A BEDOUIN ANYTIME, A CITIZEN NEVER!**

*Having by our late labours and hazards made it appear to the world at how high a rate we value our just freedom (...) we do now hold our selves bound in mutual duty to each other, to take the best care we can for the future, to avoid the danger of returning into a slavish condition.*

*- Levellers, An Agreement of the People, 1647*

Let's look beyond the tear gas, the baton sticks and the riot police vans: the operation being conducted by the bosses since December 6th doesn't comprise a mere combination of repression and propaganda; rather, it is the application of a series of methods aiming to re-negotiate social peace and consensus.

From the communist party, which views the revolted people as puppets of SYRIZA and of the CIA, all the way to socialist party politicians moaning that Athens resembles a city of the Eastern Block, what with its streets empty of consumers. From the archbishop of Thessaloniki, who begs his flock to go shopping, to the city's international exposition offering free parking to Christmas shoppers, they all hold a common target: a return to the normality of democracy and consumption. Thus the day after the revolt (which happens to coincide with a dead consumer feast known as Christmas) is accompanied by the demand that this must be celebrated at all cost; not only in order for some tills to fill up but in order for us all to return to our graves. The day after holds the demand of the living dead: that nothing disturb their eternal sleep any more. It holds a moratorium legitimizing the emptiness of their spectacle driven world, a world of quiet and peaceful life. And the generals of this war hold no weapon that is more lethal than the appeal to that absolute, timeless idea - democracy.

The word for democracy, developing as it does ever more densely from the side of the demagogues of calmness, aims at the social imagination – the collective field of structuring of desires and fears. It aims, in other words, at the field where procedures invisibly take place that can secure or threaten order and its truth. Everyone knew, well before the assassination of Alexis, that the oligarchy of capital had given up on trying to even *seem* democratic, even by bourgeois terms: economic scandals, blatant incidents of police violence, monstrous laws. Yet this fact is not, neither here nor anywhere else, what might worry the bosses. This is precisely because the constant reproduction of the establishment under such terms (*Is it democratic enough? Is it really democratic?*) reproduces the very capitalist system that builds around itself a wall of scandals, remorse, resignations, demands and reforms – preventing, in this way, the questioning of, not the democratic qualities of the regime, but rather democracy as a system of social organization. Hence bosses can still appeal to this higher value today, this axiomatic mechanism of the political, in order to bring us back to normality, consensus, compromise. In order to assimilate the general spontaneous rage back into the sphere of mediation before this rage can organize itself into a revolutionary potential which would sweep all and any intermediaries and peaceful democrats – bringing along a new form of organization: *the commune*.

Amidst this ludicrous climate of shallow analyses the salaried officials of psychological warfare point at the revolted, howling: *That's not democratic, that ignores the rules under which our democracy functions*. We cannot help but momentarily stand speechless in the face of what we would, until recently, have considered impossible. Even if having the intention to deceive, the bosses of this country have said something true: *We despise democracy more than anything else in this decadent world*. For what is democracy other than a system of discriminations and coercions in the service of property and privacy? And what are its rules, other than rules of negotiation of the right to own? *Freedom, rights, equality, egalitarianism*; all these dead ideological masks together cannot cover their mission: the generalization and preservation of the social as an economic sphere, as a sphere where not only what you have *produced* but also what you *are* and what you *can do* are already alienated. The bourgeois, with a voice trembling from piety, promise: *rights, justice, equality*. And the revolted hear: *repression, exploitation, looting*. Democracy is the political system where everyone is equal in front of the guillotine of the spectacle-commodity. The only problem that concerned democrats, from Cromwell to Montesquieu, is what form of property is sufficient in order for someone to be recognized as a citizen, what kind of rights and obligations guarantee that they will never understand themselves as something beyond a private citizen. Everything else is no more than adjusting the details of a regime in the service of capital.

Our despise for democracy is not derived from some sort of idealism but rather, from our very material animosity for a social entity where value and organization are centered around the commodity and the spectacle. The December revolt was by definition a revolt against property and alienation. Anyone that didn't hide behind the curtains of their privacy knows it only too well: shops were looted not for computers, clothes or furniture to resell but for the joy of destroying what alienates us. The fires that warmed the bodies of the revolted in those long December nights were full of the liberated products of our toil, from the disarmed symbols of what used to be an almighty fantasy. We simply took what belonged to us and we threw it to the fire together with all its co-expressions. The grand potlatch of the past few days was also a revolt of desire against the imposed rule of scarcity. A revolt of the gift against the sovereignty of money. A revolt of the anarchy of use value against the democracy of exchange value. A revolt of spontaneous collective freedom against rationalized individual coercion.



The ingenuity of people engaging in a collective struggle against capital is demonstrated as a rioter temporarily blinds police with a large, mobile fire extinguisher.



Rioters wreck the interior of a shop in Athens.



Anarchy in the cradle of democracy.



Angry young Greeks march against the police.



A scene from the battle torn streets of Athens.



*Greek Fire*: Molotov cocktails were in heavy use during the height of the insurrection



The gift of style indeed: Capital's boutiques, remodeled by the tides of revolt.

# Like a winter with a thousand Decembers

## *Reflections on the recent unrest in Greece*

*VIOLENCE means working for 40 years, getting miserable wages and wondering if you ever get to retire...*

*VIOLENCE means state bonds, robbed pension funds and the stock-market fraud...*

*VIOLENCE means being forced to get housing loans which you finally pay back as if they were gold...*

*VIOLENCE means the management's right to fire you any time they want...*

*VIOLENCE means unemployment, temporary employment, 400 Euros wage with or without social security...*

*VIOLENCE means work 'accidents,' as bosses diminish their workers' safety costs...*

*VIOLENCE means being driven sick because of hard work ...*

*VIOLENCE means consuming psycho-drugs and vitamins in order to cope with exhausting working hours...*

*VIOLENCE means working for money to buy medicines in order to fix your labor power commodity...*

*VIOLENCE means dying on ready-made beds in horrible hospitals, when you can't afford bribing.*

- Proletarians from the occupied GSEE, Athens, December 2008

Last December, the wind of insurrection blew over the cities in Greece. The joyful and festive atmosphere of Christmas was set on fire together with the Christmas tree on Syntagma square. The assassination of the 15-year-old student Alexis Grigoropoulos by a special police guard on the 6th ignited the spark.

In general, the social unrest of December can be characterized as a violent proletarian rebellion which had a sudden, mass and wild burst that gradually gave way to less violent, more imaginative and more political acts but with fewer people involved.

Gradually more and more people participated in actions that took the form of an insurrection. On the first day there were just a few hundreds of anti-authoritarians around Exarchia - the place of the murder - that started the violent confrontations with the cops. Later in the night, a spontaneous demo took place after an initiative of students and leftists. Around 2,000 people participated and started riots in Patisision and Akadimias Avenues, while one hundred people smashed Ermou St, the most commercial street in Athens. Riots also broke out in the streets of Thessaloniki where a spontaneous demo headed for and attacked the city's central police station.

On the second day more than 10,000 appeared in the streets (mostly students, anti-authoritarians again and people from left parties and organizations); on the third day more than 20,000 in Athens, 7,000 in Thessaloniki and many thousands all over Greece joined demos that were soon turned into riots. Those involved in street fighting with the police were many; 10,000 seems to be a rather moderate calculation. There were a lot more clashes all over the country, particularly on Monday, the third day of the riots. On this day, banks, public buildings and mostly big stores were either smashed, looted or burned down.

From Monday morning and during the next days there were attacks against police stations all over the country that were mainly made by high school students. Some of those attacks were very violent with police cars being overturned and use of Molotov cocktails (mostly in the west suburbs of Athens and the port of Pireaus), but demonstrating outside the police stations became quite generalized all over Greece, even in some posh areas or small towns, with milder forms of protest. It was actually through the spontaneous violent protests of high school students that the riots spread and thus took nationwide dimensions.

When we talk about clashes with cops, we are mostly talking about barricades, throwing stones and Molotov cocktails and not physical combat. Generally, not only the rioters, but also the police preferred not to engage in “close-combat” relying on excessive use of tear gas instead.

The spontaneity and uncontrollable nature of this insurrection was proven by the absence of political proposals, thus by an explicit rejection of politics. It was mostly leftists that insisted on particular demands like the resignation of the government, the repeal of the anti-terrorist act, the disarmament of cops and the disbandment of special police forces. However, the feeling that there lay *‘something deeper’* in all that was so dominant that it alone explains the helplessness of some parties of the opposition, leftist organizations, even some anarchists. There were no specific political demands and this, combined with their ferocity, made the riots all too threatening for the usual forces of recuperation and manipulation.

From the very first days of the revolt three universities were also occupied in the centre of Athens: the National Technical University of Athens, the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Economics. Each one of them was occupied by a different tendency in the movement. The National Technical University, which is the nearest one to Exarchia square was the main place for organizing clashes with the police. Its occupants were almost a cross-section of the rebels in Athens: young workers (immigrant or Greek), students and marginalized elements – and many of them anarchists. The occupants of the Faculty of Law, mainly leftists and some anti-authoritarians, organized demos and discussions. In one of them, leftist unionists gathered in order to organize and ‘spread the rebellion’ to workplaces, without actually doing anything apart from putting out some flyers. The Faculty of Economics was occupied mostly by anarchist groups and anti-authoritarians who wanted to use the building for counter-information purposes. A lot of emphasis was put on the organization of everyday activities. They took over the cafeteria of the university and workshops were formed in order to run the occupation and to organize actions outside. The expropriated resources of the

university were also used in other activities, serving as an infrastructure. Many comrades took part in actions organized from there, even if they did not take part in the occupation itself. In Thessaloniki, there were two such occupations in the city center: the School of Drama was occupied by anarchist militants and drama students, while the offices of Thessaloniki’s Bar Association were occupied until the fourth day of the rebellion by students, mainly leftists.

We should also mention here the dozens of occupations of university departments voted for by students’ general assemblies and the hundreds of occupations of high schools all over the country.

Gradually, the violence of the first days proved to be creative in the sense that it was the necessary presupposition for more imaginative and organized actions that followed. After the first five days of rioting, there was an occupation at the Town Hall of Ag. Dimitrios (a southern suburb of Athens) organized by local anarchist groups and some of the workers employed there (predominantly blue collar workers). The occupants organized meetings with local people, called ‘popular assemblies,’ trying to broaden the revolt by organizing local actions, always connected to the larger revolt. They even tried to let certain services run in the building without the mediation of the municipal authorities. The next day, an information desk of the Ministry of Interior at Chalandri, a northern suburb of Athens, was occupied and demonstrations and actions, always connected with the revolt, were organized.

Among the ‘population’, or better - the working class as a whole, there was sympathy towards the rioters not only because it was their children fighting and demonstrating out there, but also because they felt that it was a just fight. Particularly the burning of banks was very popular since thousands of people are deep in debt. Looting was not accepted, at least not overtly, because of the strong respect for private property – or, in the case of leftists and some anarchists, for moral reasons. Generally speaking, there was a lot of sympathy for and interest in the insurgents but very little *active* involvement from part of the ‘population’.

From the very first moment after the killing on December 6, state and media mechanisms were activated to confront the explosion of proletarian rage. Initially, they attempted to put possible reactions under control: exploiting the spectacular submission of the resignations by Pavlopoulos and Chinofotis (the Minister and ex-Deputy Minister of the Interior, correspondingly), the Prime Minister's promise that anybody responsible for the death of the 15-year-old kid will be 'exemplarily punished,' all oppositional parties' and many journalists' disapproval of the government and the 'discreet stance' of cops against demonstrators. However, very quickly, they unleashed every form of repression: threats of declaring the country in a state of emergency, mobilization of fascists and para-governmental organizations of 'indignant citizens,' dozens of arrests and beating of demonstrators, more shootings by cops in Athens. All the bosses' parties in a body (with the Communist Party [KKE] being the most vulgar amongst them) and the TV scamps attempting to spread fear. Similarly, the two major union confederations, GSEE and ADEDY, cancelled the routine strike demonstrations against the new year's state budget when they suspected the danger of those demos being transformed into riots.

However, against union bureaucrats' jabber about the government's failing to ensure social order and peace, demos did take place during the general strike and were indeed wild. Thus, reality was different: bosses were those who were afraid. When the foreign minister of France stated from the very first days of the insurgency *'I would like to express our concern, everyone's concern about the progress of conflicts in Greece,'* he would express the bosses' fear of the possibility that this social explosion would be circulated, since demos in solidarity with the insurgents in Greece were taking place in many cities all over the world. Particularly in France, the Ministry of Education withdrew an impending reform of secondary schools, thus giving an end to the emerging movement of high school kids applauding the flames of insurgency in Greek cities and towns.

On the side of state and media propaganda, the dominant strategy was that of separation of the subjects of the insurrection. They were either presenting the insurgency as an adventure of teenagers, whose inherent sensitivity due to their age gives them a right to rebel against their parents' world (as if proletarian parents wouldn't rightfully desire this world's destruction), or they were mobilizing racist reflexes using the fake separation 'Greek demonstrators - immigrant looters.' They were mainly attempting to separate demonstrators between the good-peaceful ones and the bad-rioters. The right of demonstrating was affirmed by bosses and their lackeys only to suppress the insurrection. Because they wanted to avoid any further socialization of violent behaviors in the streets, they sought by all means to present them as actions of 'anti-authoritarians' or 'hooligans' who intruded into demonstrations of otherwise peace-loving civilians. Smashing as a proletarian action declared the everyday existence of police departments, banks or chain stores as moments in a silent war. It also manifested a rupture with the democratic management of social conflict, which tolerates demos against this or that matter, provided that they are deprived of any autonomous class action. Invoking the ultimate political rampart of capital's dominance, that is democracy, the prime minister declared that *'social struggles or the death of a teenager cannot be confused with actions against democracy'.*

Democracy of course approves of devastating cities and the countryside, polluting the atmosphere and contaminating water, bombing, selling weapons, creating dumps of human beings, forcing us to stop being humans in order to become objects-that-work (or look for work, since more and more people are or will be unemployed because of the crisis). He thus implied that some people can destroy anything they want as long as new chances for profit are created and development is promoted. However, doing this against private property constitutes the ultimate scandal for a society which has established this essential right from its early birth. Burning and smashing constitute wounds to this society's legitimacy. The 'hooded rioters' is an empty notion, intended for police use exclusively. Police monopolize the shaping of the threat's profile. We should add here that since the shooting of a riot-cop in Exarchia on

January 4<sup>th</sup> police repression against demonstrators has escalated. Locals who defended a park in the city of Athens, farmers who intended to drive their tractors to the parliament and demonstrators against the imprisonment of those who have been arrested up till now have all been attacked not only with tear gas but with grenades as well.

For the image-producing machine, the very opposite of the 'hooded rioter' (that is, the image constructed to separate proletarians) was the 'peaceful civilian whose property was destroyed.' Who was this celebrated 'peaceful civilian,' enraged by smashing? On this occasion, 'peaceful civilians' were the small businessmen, the owners of 'small' stores, the petit bourgeoisie. The state has been fooling even them, since many of them are being destroyed by the capitalist crisis. During last December, turnover was half that of December 2007, not only for streets with expensive stores, but also for open-air markets; yet no such market was attacked during the riots... Bosses claimed that smashing stores had made many people lose their jobs, while at the same time one hundred thousand layoffs are to be announced soon in Greece because of the crisis. However, whatever smashes of 'small' stores were not carried out by hooded state servants were commented on by workers in such stores in a leaflet written by the *Autonomous Initiative of Shop-assistants of Larisa*:

*We denounce whoever attempts to terrorize and convince us that defending some properties stands above human life and dignity. Besides, these properties have been created by precarious workers' unpaid, black and surplus labor. No small properties have been damaged during symbolic attacks against banks and public buildings [Indeed, this is true for Larissa and other provincial cities]. If they really care about shop-assistants, they should increase the miserable wages they give us, they should learn what social security is and they should create human working hours and conditions.*

The parties of the left were taken aback by the riots and had a varied attitude towards them. SYRIZA, a coalition of Synaspismos and other minor leftist organizations, kept a balanced attitude towards the rebellion. The top leaders of the party machine did not hesitate to keep their distance from the violence of the rioters, even to denounce them, however, in a moderate way compared to the frenzy of the KKE. On the tremendous night of the 8th of December demonstrators of SYRIZA abused violent demonstrators without, however, trying to prevent them. Ordinary members or voters of SYRIZA were very sympathetic in most cases towards the rebellion although presenting it as a 'youth explosion' and consequently as something external to them. Students of SYRIZA took part in the demos against the police and they had a milder attitude towards them, in most cases. KKE, understanding perfectly that it was their very political power as a part of the political system which was at stake, chose to adopt a cop-like attitude resembling the far-Right, condemning rioters as a whole as 'provocateurs,' manipulated by domestic and foreign 'dark centers.' As for leftist parties and organizations and KOE in particular (a member of the SYRIZA coalition), they were in favor of the rebellion as an explosion 'expected' by them, but one without 'positive' demands. That's why they were eager to present a list of demands asking the government to resign so that they could politically exploit the change of the political personnel. Of the various Trotskyist groups some were more active than others and participated in the Faculty of Law occupation and KKE M-L had a rather positive attitude towards the rebellion, abstaining of course from the clashes with the police. In general, leftists, except for few groups, had a rather superficial relation to the rebellion taking part mostly in demos but not in other activities.

The strength of fascists in Greece cannot be compared to that of the fascists in Italy during the 70's. The main neo-Nazi organization (Chris Avgi – i.e. Golden Dawn) can count on a few hundred militants all over Greece. There's also LAOS, a far right populist party which is the fifth party of the Greek parliament with 3.8% of the vote, but it's hard to calculate its militant basis.

Although right-wing militants took part in the repression of the revolt in the cities of Patras (mostly) and Larissa (to a lesser degree), it's impossible to make a comparison between the situation in Italy and the situation in Greece because the fascists in Greece are less organized. It was one of the state's last resorts when media propaganda and cop repression were not sufficient, but only in Patras did they have an organizational basis (one with a long tradition, indeed – Temponeras, a high-school teacher was murdered in one occupied school in Patras in 1991 by the then secretary of the Youth branch of the right wing party, which is now in government).

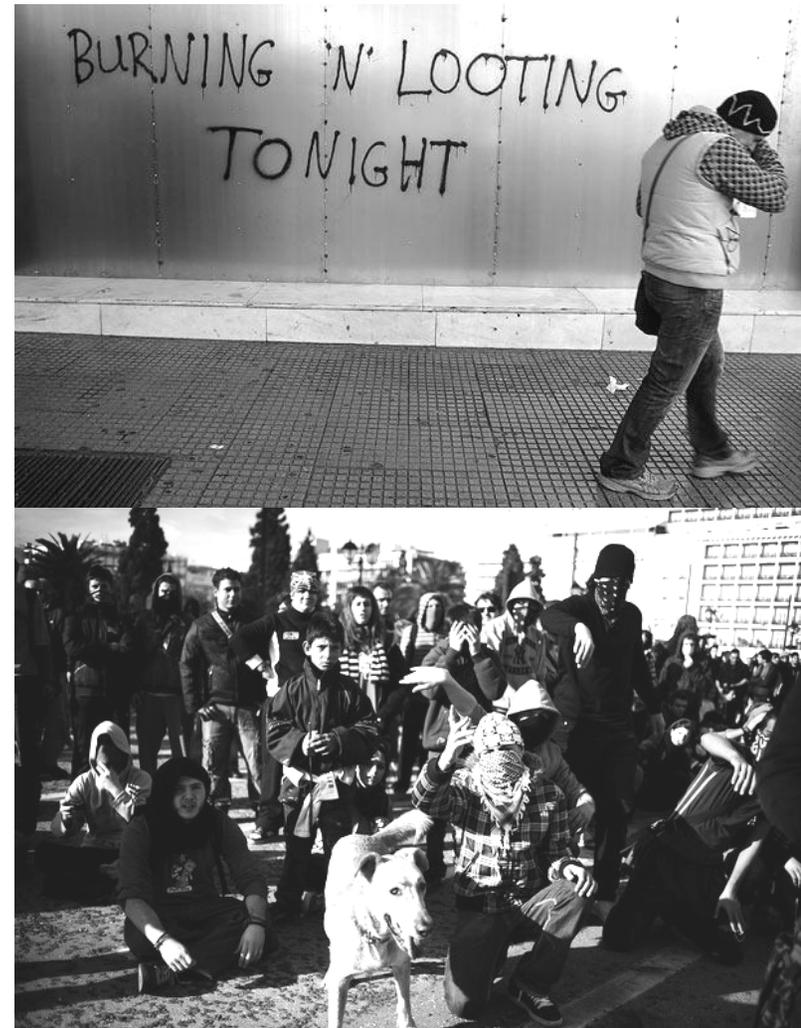
The riots were connected with a particular political subculture, that of anarchists and anti-authoritarians in Greece, who played a very important role during the first two days of the riots and especially the first one. Their immediate violent reaction to the murder triggered off a social explosion that surpassed them and spread all over Greece. Because of the activities of students and other parts of the proletariat who left their own marks on it, the rebellion of December cannot be reduced to the ritual of street-fighting this sub-culture seemed traditionally so keen on and trapped in, as well.

Although the rebellion has ended, there are still visible traces of it. Some occupations remain, solidarity to those arrested and the spirit of the rebellion still unites various elements who took part in the insurrection (although certain sectarian and ideological signs appear), new struggles emerge with more radical characteristics and violence against the state seems to be a lot more legitimized.

The rise of new organizational forms and contents of struggle is being discussed by all the insurgent elements. Politically, those left parties and organizations that were taken by surprise and stood in awe of the rebellion will not offer much. They are just hoping for new members and seem rather untouched by the rebellion. The unions, both as a form and content of struggle, small or big, remained untouched by the insurrection or even hostile to it. The mainstream parties cannot hide their fear

confronted with such powerful gestures of disobedience and attack on all institutions. There are certain signs of a return to the normality of both everyday life and politics as usual but also traces of new alliances and practices which will need time to get a clearer form and content.

**TPTG, BLAUMACHEN** February 4, 2009



Top: A clear message sent by the rebels. One hopes *The Wailers* would approve.

Bottom: Proletarian youth take a break during a lull in the street fighting.

# The rebellious passage of a proletarian minority through a brief period of time

*An analysis of the Greek rebellion of December 2008 and the post-rebellion developments as aspects of the crisis of capitalist relations in Greece.*

## **AN EPOCHAL CRISIS?**

Since the mid 70's there has been a *worldwide permanent crisis of reproduction of capitalist relations* in all their forms (political, economic and ideological). As we understand it, this crisis has two aspects: it is a *crisis of over accumulation of capital*, which means an inability, on the part of the capitalists, to increase the rate of exploitation and reduce the cost of constant capital and so increase the rate of profit demanded by an advancing capital accumulation; at the same time, it is a *legitimization crisis*, that is a crisis of the political and ideological forms that guaranteed the discipline of the labor power. We could speak about the inability of capital and its state to put forward a new global productive/social model that would replace the post war Keynesian deal, hard hit both by the struggles of the planetary proletariat and the capitalist policies against them.

During this long drawn out *crisis of reproduction* there have been periods of cyclical depressions. *Capital in general* has tried to deal with them in various ways: by changing the global institutional and legal framework of the movement of capital and "liberalizing" the markets, by promoting a mixture of neoliberalism and Keynesianism through war, by decreasing wages and institutionalizing the precaritization of labor, by

accomplishing new enclosures, by putting the "dangerous classes" under penal surveillance and/or integrating them into the credit system through a policy of "privatized Keynesianism".

Despite temporal recoveries, the ultimate failure of all the above strategies and tactics aimed at deferring the aggravation of the crisis has in the long run turned this crisis of reproduction into an epochal crisis, as many argue.

During the last two decades, the crisis of reproduction in Greece has been dealt with by capital and its state by successive reforms of the education and welfare system, by promoting the precaritization of work relations, by continuous legal attempts to discipline immigrants and control the immigration flows, by cutting down allowances, wages and benefits and replacing them with bank loans. All these measures aiming at devaluing, disciplining and dividing the working class and making workers pay the cost of the reproduction of their labor power have not succeeded in decisively reversing the crisis to the advantage of capital – despite the fact that during the period between the mid 90's and the mid 2000's capital had managed to increase the rate of exploitation and expand its profitability.

In Greece the crisis of reproduction has manifested itself most explicitly as a crisis of legitimization of capitalist relations, either through the permanent crisis in education in the last 30 years (see our text on the primary teachers' strike in 2006 and the student movement in 2006-07) or a lot more through the December rebellion. The rebellion was a clear expression of proletarian anger against a life that is getting more and more devaluated, surveilled and alienated. However, the December crisis cannot be directly connected with the recent depression that started manifesting itself in Greece in September 2008.

## THE REBELLION: ITS CLASS COMPOSITION

We won't describe here thoroughly the various things that happened during the rebellion as we've done this elsewhere. As far as the class composition of the rebellion is concerned, it ranged from high school students and university students to young, mostly precarious workers from various sectors like education, construction, tourist and entertainment services, transportation, even media. (Of course, it's not easy to distinguish students from precarious workers). As far as factory workers are concerned, there can be no accurate estimation about their individual participation in the riots, since no reports from such workplaces became known. Some of the students and the workers were second generation immigrants (mostly Albanians, although there were also some immigrants of other nationalities). There were also many older workers with more or less stable jobs, but they were rather a minority. Some of the students and the workers that participated in the riots are also football hooligans. Last, but not least, we have to mention the participation of "lumpen" proletarians, like junkies, mostly during the first days of the rebellion. In general, it was precisely those segments of the class that have been experiencing directly the violence of state surveillance and the deterioration of work conditions that were most active in the rebellion. On the other hand, many older workers that had just started experiencing the so-called "financial crisis" (lay-offs, wage reduction, etc.) were very sympathetic towards the burning down of banks and state buildings, but were mostly passive.

It might be interesting to add that because of the motley composition of the multitude and its violence, a lot of politicians (even some organized anarchists) found it too "uncontrollable" and distanced themselves from what happened especially on the third day of the rebellion when violence reached its peak.

The high percentage of immigrants in the rebellion demands some explanation. The influx of many Balkan immigrants, especially Albanians, in the last twenty years has changed significantly the composition of the

working class in Greece. At the same time, due to the immigration policy of the Greek capitalist state, a whole generation of young immigrants, mostly Albanians, that were born or grew up in Greece are not considered to be Greek citizens. The legalization of all immigrants is undesirable because, for capital and its state, immigrants are only needed when they constitute an insecure, cheap and obedient workforce. The so-called process of "legalization," in Greece and other countries, has long been considered as necessary for capital and its state only in order to control and keep track of the immigration flows. That's why even second generation immigrants can not easily get a green card; on the contrary, they have to prove their "ability" to stay and work in the country every five years at most and of course they don't have the right to vote. Not to mention that their working conditions are the worst as far as wages and social security are concerned. But despite racism, of both social and state origin, most second generation immigrants are quite well integrated, especially the Albanians who constitute the majority of the immigrant population in general.

Second generation young Albanians fitted very well with the rest of the native rioters. They felt more "comfortable" taking part in confrontations with cops, in attacks against state buildings and banks and in lootings alongside young Greek proletarians than other immigrants, mostly Asians and Africans who still live on the fringe, isolated in their ethnic communities. For the latter, it was easier and less risky to participate in the riots through looting or frequenting the open National Technical University occupation in the centre of Athens where big communities of them live in areas resembling ghettos; when the riots erupted near "their" neighborhoods, that was the way they "contributed" to them. They received the most violent onslaught from both the police and the media propaganda. They were presented as "plunderers" and "thieves" and in some cases there were pogrom style attacks against them by fascists and undercover cops.

## THE REBELLION: ITS CHARACTER AND CONTENT

The rebels who met in the streets and the occupations temporarily superseded their separated identities and roles imposed on them by capitalist society since they met not as workers, university or school students or immigrants but as rebels. They may not all have used a proletarian language, they may not have been able to go on strike, except for the high school and university students, but what they really did was to create *proletarian communities of struggle* against the state and capital. The spontaneous and uncontrolled character of the rebellion was proved precisely by the lack of any political or economic demands whatsoever, by a complete negation of politics and trade unionism. This proved to be the strength of the rebellion: the fact that it was impossible to be represented, co-opted or manipulated by political mechanisms that would make bargains with the state. The extra-parliamentary left organizations who participated in the occupation of the Faculty of Law tried to impose some political demands (ranging from disarmament of the cops and resignation of the government to granting interest-free mortgage loans) but found no reception.

Here we will quote from the first account of the rebellion we wrote in late January:

*Judging from the slogans and the attacks against the police, an overwhelmingly anti-cop sentiment was dominant during the days of the rebellion. The cop stood for power and particularly the brutality and arrogance of power. However, it was as symbols of a certain power - the power of money, the power to impose the exploitation of labor and deepen the class lines separating Greek society - that big stores, banks as well as state buildings (town halls, prefecture buildings, ministries) were attacked, burnt down or occupied. So, we could speak of a dominant and widespread anti-cop, anti-state, anti-capitalist feeling. Even the intellectuals of the left acknowledged the class element of the rebellion and some mainstream newspapers admitted that "young people's rage" was*

*not expressed only because of police violence. The cops were rather the most visible and crudest tip of an iceberg made of government corruption scandals, a security-surveillance state - armored after the 2004 Olympics - that does not even hesitate to shoot in cold blood, a continuous attack on wages, an increase of working class reproduction costs through the gradual demolition of the previous pension and health system, a deterioration of work conditions and an increase of precarious jobs and unemployment, a load of overwork imposed on high school and university students, a tremendous destruction of nature, a glamorous facade consisting of abstract objects of desire in malls and on TV ads, obtainable only if you endure a huge amount of exploitation and anxiety. In the first days of the revolt you could almost smell all these reasons in the air and then a lot of texts, articles, leaflets followed, written both by insurgents or sympathizers and "commentators" to acknowledge that there was "something deeper." This "deeper thing" that everybody was talking about was **the need to overcome the individual isolation from real, communal life** [gemeinwesen], an isolation that all the above historical reasons have created.*

Six months later, it is still important for us to lay emphasis on this last point because many comrades abroad think that the movement only attacked the cops and the institutions of control – the "tip of the iceberg." The rebellious experience was more than that. It was the *common* activity of an emerging subversive undercurrent that *knows* that, alongside the sphere of immediate production, school, family, consumption, politics, prison and the police *do* produce and reproduce classes. The rebellious experience, the material community of struggle against normalization – when one deviant individual became the mediator of another deviant individual, a real social being – mediated emotions and thought and created a proletarian public sphere. This open sphere is the necessary presupposition of the decisive moment of social subversion: the communization of the means of production and intercourse. But this decisive moment, the point of no return, was never

reached. After all, this was just the rebellious passage of a proletarian minority through a brief period of time and not a revolution. However, the feeling that there lay "something deeper" in all that, the idea that the issues raised by the rebels concerned everybody, was so dominant that it alone explains the helplessness of the parties of the opposition, leftist organizations, even some anarchists as mentioned before.

Here, just because high school and university students were such a significant subject of the rebellion, we should be more analytical about the load of overwork imposed on them that we mentioned before. Education, as the main capitalist institution that shapes, qualifies and allocates the labor-power commodity in a continuously developing capitalist division of labor, has been expanding in terms of student population since the 60's in Greece. This development has given rise to new "popular" demands, expectations, opportunities of social mobility and individual "successes." It has also led to the accumulation of tensions and contradictions, frustrations and individual "failures" (also called "failures of the schooling system"). The mass production of expectations (and the corresponding rise in white collar proletarians and new petit-bourgeois strata in the 70's and the 80's) caused by the democratization and expansion of education created an inevitable structural crisis in the hierarchical division of labor and a crisis of discipline and meaning in school; in other words, a legitimization crisis that hit state education hard. No matter what you call this crisis – a "crisis of legitimacy," a "crisis in the selective-allocating role of education," a "crisis of expectations" or a "crisis in the correspondence of qualifications to career opportunities" – the truth is that education has been seriously crisis-ridden and, as the recent massive student movement of 2006-2007 had shown, this situation has exploded. It is possible to understand both that movement and the rebellion if we see them as expressions of the accumulated dissatisfaction a whole generation of working class youth has been experiencing since the previous reforms in the 90's. These reforms were instrumental in imposing intensified work rates in the school and in the realm of proper wage labor. This generation could not be stopped from expressing its discontent for a life that is increasingly characterized by

insecurity and fear. At the same time, they revolted against an everyday activity that looks similar to any other kind of work. This *revolt against student labor* was given a boost by a significant number of students who already experience exploitation and alienation directly as proper wage laborers.

### **SOME FORMS OF ORGANIZATION THAT CAME OUT OF THE REBELLION**

From the first day of the rebellion, three universities in the centre of Athens were occupied and were used effectively as "red bases" of the movement from which subversive actions were organized and where rebels could seek refuge, if necessary. These occupations ended just before Christmas. In direct communication with these occupations, several local assemblies appeared gradually, linked to occupations of public buildings in some neighborhoods. As we had said in the same text mentioned above:

*In all these activities, the common new characteristic was an attempt to "open up" the rebellion towards the neighborhoods. These assemblies were understood as "neighborhood assemblies of struggle" or "people's assemblies," as they were called. In most cases, there appeared distinct tendencies inside this social "opening," particularly as the rebellion was simmering down. One tendency wanted to organize a community of struggle broadening the issues of the rebellion, another one preferred a kind of activity more orientated towards dealing with local matters on a steady basis. In the beginning, the assemblies looked pretty innovative and lively. There was not a formal procedure of decision making or majority rule and initiatives were encouraged. However, by the end of January, the occupations of buildings - whether public, union or municipal - did not flourish anymore... There was a lot of sympathy and interest for the insurgents but very little active involvement on the part of the "population."*

Some of these assemblies are still going on but with less and less people involved, mainly activists. Their main interests nowadays are the expression of solidarity to those prosecuted by the state and to immigrants, the defense of the occupied spaces in the city as well as the organization of several activities connected to current struggles (e.g. the new anti-motorways movement).

### **THE SPECTACULAR SEPARATION OF ARMED "STRUGGLE"**

The need to mediate proletarian anger politically, even if it is to mediate it with an armed mediation, was not something that stemmed from the struggle itself but it was something that was being imposed on the struggle from the outside and afterwards. In the beginning, there were two attacks by the so-called "armed vanguard," one on the 23rd of December after the peak of the rebellion and one on the 5th of January, when the resurgence of the rebellion was at stake. From a proletarian point of view, even if these attacks were not organized by the state itself, the fact that after a month all of us became spectators of those "exemplary acts," that had not at all been part of our collective practice, was a defeat in itself. The "armed vanguard" evades admitting not only that they were not the first ones to target the police but also that no "armed vanguard," nowhere and never, has succeeded in making the police literally disappear from the streets and in making individual cops not dare carry their official identities with them for a few days; they evade admitting that they were surpassed by the movement. Claiming that there is "a need to upgrade" violence, the so-called "armed vanguard" essentially tries to downgrade the socially and geographically diffused proletarian violence and violation of the law; the latter are the true opponents of the "armed vanguard" within the movement and as long as such practices go on no interventionism of "upgrading" things can find a fertile soil. It is on that basis that the armed struggle allies with the state: both are challenged by proletarian subversive activity, the continuation of which constitutes a threat to the existence of them both.

Proletarian subversive activity in the rebellion gained a temporary but not so superficial victory: an insubordination which weakened the security-surveillance state for a month and proved that we *can* change the power relations. This became possible since the rebels targeted the social relations in which they are forced to live, something that no "armed vanguard" has ever managed to do.

Considering the range and the intensity of all the December events, the state repressive apparatus proved practically weak. Since they had to deal with a de-legitimization of the institutions of control and not just bullets and grenades, the infamous zero tolerance became a simple tolerance towards the rebels' activities. The state counter-attack could actually become successful in January only when it made use of the "armed vanguard" operations: first, on an ideological level, by equating the state murder with the wounding of a riot cop, thus re-legitimizing the police and the security-surveillance state in general, and, second, on an operational level by intensifying its repression. They even exploited the place of the attack (Exarchia), presenting the rebellion as a spectacular vendetta between cops and "anarchists," as a grotesque and banal performance staged in a political ghetto.

As the rebellion was dying away, there was a notable proliferation of attacks against banks and state buildings by several groups, which cannot be placed in the same category with the "armed vanguard" "deeds," since most of them do not claim to be ahead of the actual movement (although they do not necessarily lack a voluntaristic, arrogant posture). However, the return of the "armed vanguard" proper with the execution of an anti-terrorist squad cop in early June, when even the memory of the rebellion had weakened, has given militarism and the escalation of pure violence a pretext to present themselves as an attractive alternative to a (small?) part of those who participated in the rebellion, if we are to judge by the political tolerance of the anti-authoritarian milieu towards this action. The limited class composition of the rebellion, its restricted extension beyond the level of the de-legitimization of the security-surveillance state and the gradual

weakening of several communal projects in the centre and the neighborhoods – mostly in Athens – led to the flourishing of a separated kind of blind violence as a dangerous caricature of "struggle" or rather a substitute. As certain important subjects of the rebellion were gradually leaving the stage (the high school students, the university students, the immigrants), its social content got weaker and weaker and political identities became again strengthened as was the norm before. The "armed vanguard" violence is just one of these political identities, even in its naive and nihilistic form, appearing *in an era of a generalized crisis of reproduction where the state and capital are unable to offer any social democratic type of "remedies" to heal the wounds of the rebellion.*

It's not important for us now to doubt about the real identity of these hit men with the ridiculous but revealing name "Revolutionary Sect;" what causes us some concern is the political tolerance of some quarters towards them, given the fact that it's the first time that in a Greek "armed vanguard's" text there's not one grain of even the good old Leninist "for the people" ideology but instead an anti-social, nihilistic blood thirst. The crisis of neoliberalism as a certain phase of the capitalist accumulation and legitimization crisis seems to lead to a deeper crisis (even to serious signs of social decomposition) and not to any signs of revival of reformism. Even the recent electoral failure of the governing party combined with the high percentage of election abstention (the highest ever in an excessively politicized country like Greece), which was an indirect result of the legitimization crisis that the rebellion expressed and deepened, have not led to any concessions on the part of the state. With all its own limits, the rebellion made the limits of capitalist integration even more visible than before. The slogan "communism or capitalist civilization" seems timely more than ever.

## **THE REBELLION, THE WORKPLACES AND THE RANK'N'FILE UNIONS**

To discuss the reasons why the rebellion did not extend to the places of waged labor – a question often asked by comrades abroad – we need first to be more analytical about certain segments of the proletariat. From

our empirical knowledge, those workers who can be described either as "workers with a stable job" or non-precarious had a very limited participation in the rebellion, if any. For those of them who actually took part in the rebellion, to try to extend it to their workplaces would mean to engage in wildcat strikes outside and against trade unions, since most strikes are called and controlled by them, although their prestige has been undermined for a long time now. In the last twenty years many strikes have been called in the public sector (education, public utility services, some ministries). These past struggles have revealed that the workers were not able to create autonomous forms of organization and let new contents emerge beyond the trade unionist demands. As far as occupations of workplaces are concerned, such activities have taken place only in defensive struggles against closures or relocations, mostly of textile factories. But even those, as well as most strikes, in the previous years have by and large been defeated in meeting their demands.

Besides all that, capitalism in Greece is characterized by a low concentration of capital with many small firms where even less than ten people are employed and where almost no kind of unionism exists. One of the main subjects of the rebellion, thus, the precarious waged workers, who mainly work in such places, do not consider them to be a terrain of proletarian power and mobilization and in most cases they are not attached to their job. Possibly, it was precisely their inability or even unwillingness to mobilize there that made young precarious workers take to the streets. Moreover, like we said before, this first *urban rebellion* in Greece was, like all modern urban rebellions, a violent eruption of *de-legitimization* of capitalist institutions of control and, what's more, a short-lived experience of a *communal life against separations and outside the workplaces* – with the notable exception of the universities and the municipality of Aghios Dimitrios. In the case of precarious workers, extending the rebellion to their workplaces would mean wildcats and occupations and nothing less. Well, certainly, given the practical possibilities there and their subjective disposition, such an extension was both unfeasible and undesirable.

However, many rebels realized these limits and tried to make such a leap. The occupation of the central offices of the General Confederation of Labor of Greece (GSEE) stemmed from this need as well as the need to undermine the media presentation of the rebellion as a "youth protest at the expense of the workers' interests." Besides, it offered an opportunity to expose the undermining role of GSEE itself in the rebellion. The initiative was taken by some members of the rank'n'file union of couriers who are mostly anti-authoritarians. However, during the occupation it became obvious that even the rank'n'file version of unionism could not relate to the rebellion. There were two, although not clear-cut, tendencies even at the preparation assembly: a unionist-workerist one and a proletarian one. For those in the first one the occupation should have had a distinct "worker" character as opposed to the so-called youth or "metropolitan" character of the rebellion while those in the second one saw it as only one moment of the rebellion, as an opportunity to attack one more institution of capitalist control and as a meeting point of high-school students, university students, unemployed, waged workers and immigrants, that is as one more community of struggle in the context of the general unrest. In fact, the unionist-workerist tendency tried to use the occupation rather as an instrument in the service of the above mentioned union and the idea of a base unionism independent of political influences in general. This didn't work. That's why some of them remained there just for two days.

As far as the rest of the "independent" left unions are concerned, things were even worse. There was only one assembly of trade unionists in the Faculty of Law on the 10th of December where several left bureaucrats stressed the need for a "political prospect" in the rebellion, meaning a political and unionist mediation expressed in a list of mostly populist demands. They rejected any proposals of violent forms of action and pompously called for extraordinary general assemblies and agitation at the workplaces for a general strike after one week – needless to say that nothing of the sort was ever tried.

In January the media workers that had participated actively in the rebellion occupied the offices of the corporatist journalists' trade union. The Union of Editors of the Daily Newspapers of Athens (ESIEA) is the main journalists' trade union in Greece. It includes journalists from the major Athenian newspapers many of whom are at the same time employers because they are TV-producers or they own newspapers, while it excludes those journalists who work with precarious contracts or are hired as "freelancers." The occupation of ESIEA focused broadly on two issues: the first was the work relations and the widespread precariousness in the media industry as well as the fragmented form of union organization of the media workers; the second was the control of information by the official media, the way the revolt was "covered" by them and how counter-information could be produced by the movement.

After the end of the occupation the same people created an assembly of media workers, students and unemployed which organized a series of actions at various workplaces against layoffs or attempted layoffs and "covered" demos and other activities of the movement in a way that was against the dominant propaganda. Many members of this assembly are former students of the Faculty of Mass Media and Communication and took part in the students' movement against the university reform in 2006-07 while some of them had attempted to create a new union that would include all the media workers. Right now the workers of the media industry are organized in 15 different unions (photographers, journalists, cameramen, clerical staff, etc). The idea is to create a union that will include all workers, regardless of their position, from cleaners to journalists, and their labor contract, from fulltime employees to "freelancers." Recently they tried to coordinate their activity with that of the laid off workers of the newspaper "Eleftheros Typos."

On the 22nd of December, in Petralona, an old working class neighborhood of the city of Athens, a Bulgarian immigrant cleaner, Konstantina Kuneva, the General Secretary of the Janitors Union (PEKOP-All Attica Union for Janitors and Home Service Personnel), was the victim

of an attack by goons of the bosses using sulphuric acid while returning home from her workplace, a railroad station of the ISAP public utility (Athens-Pireaus Electric Trains). She was seriously wounded, losing the use of one eye and of her vocal chords and she is still in hospital. It's worth mentioning that she had also visited the occupation of GSEE since her previous activities had led her to a confrontation with the leadership of the confederation bureaucracy.

The attack on Konstantina took place a couple of days after the end of the occupation of GSEE and that was one of the reasons why there was such an unprecedented mobilization of people. After the attack, a "solidarity assembly" was formed which using direct action tactics organized a series of actions (occupation of the headquarters of ISAP, sabotage of the ticket machines so that the commuters could travel free, demos). The assembly, despite its internal divisions, played a vital role in inspiring a remarkable solidarity movement which grew up throughout Greece demanding not only the prosecution of the perpetrators and the instigators but also the abolition of subcontracting altogether. We should add here that outsourcing cleaning services has become the norm for public sector companies and these companies do not hire cleaners any more. Contractors are now the employers of thousands of janitors, mainly women immigrants, who clean hundreds of public utilities, hospitals, railroad stations, schools, universities and other public buildings. However, regarding the character of cleaning sector jobs, these were always precarious and until the recent past it was regarded to be normal and natural for a woman to be a janitor or home service worker. Moreover, by equating subcontracting or precariousness in general with "slavery," the majority of this solidarity movement, mainly comprised of leftist union activists, is trying to equate certain struggles against precariousness – one of the main forms of capitalist restructuring in this historical moment – with *general political demands* of a social-democratic content regarding the state as a "reliable" and preferable employer to private subcontractors and thus putting the question of the abolition of wage labor *per se* aside.

## **THE DEPRESSION IN NUMBERS, THE STATE STRATEGIES AND THE CLASS**

As we said in the beginning, in Greece the signs of the depression have been more evident since last year. In order to have a clearer idea of the signs and the consequences of the most recent phase of the crisis, some data concerning the situation of the working class are necessary.

According to Eurostat, the highest shares of the population living in households that had been in arrears with mortgage were found in Greece. According to research by the Bank of Greece in 2007, 6 out of 10 Greek households had been in arrears with mortgage, 7 out of 10 had been in arrears with consumer loans, 1 out of 2 had been in arrears with credit cards. Apart from credit, 7 out of 10 households had been in arrears with rent and 6 out of 10 had been in arrears with utility bills. The number of households on credit exceeds 51%, that means 2.15 million are on some kind of credit. So it's evident that taking recourse to credit has started reaching its limits. As far as wages and unemployment are concerned, indices are also revealing. 50% of the waged get less than 1030 euros gross. The basic wage in Greece is the lowest one in West Europe (50% of the EE15 wages). Youth unemployment reached 25.7% in 2008 and as far as women are concerned, they are the most hard hit by unemployment in Europe. About 800,000 workers fall within the so-called 500 Euro generation. 300,000 of them are "freelancers," 295,000 work part-time, 180,000 were officially unemployed in 2008 and 80,000 people were expected to join the state Stage programs (extremely low paid jobs in the public or private sector without social security and which supposedly offer training) for the years 2008-9.

In the first quarter of 2009, the rate of growth in Greece was just above zero because of a decrease of investment of private capital and was stabilized here only through state investments. Due to the depression, 160,000 people have become redundant, and they are about to increase to 300,000 mainly in small and very small firms.

Now, in certain sectors the situation is as follows:

In the shipping trade, a lot of sailors have not been paid while their wages will be frozen. Public sector workers will have their wages frozen, too. In industry and in textile factories in particular, redundancies of permanent and contract workers, a shorter working week with less pay and delay of payment have become more and more frequent. In the construction sector there is a high rate of unemployment and a fall of 17% in production. Tourism, the sector with the biggest share in the GNP, has already been hit with high rates of unemployment and a fall of 9% in tourist arrivals.

Although the situation is certainly bleak, workers' reactions have been less than moderate and certainly too weak to counter-attack the capitalist restructuring. There have been quite few mobilizations in response to the mass lay-offs, delay of payments or closures of companies, mostly short strikes or work stoppages in some factories. Quite few occupations of factories or companies (in a paper mill, a telecommunication company and a furniture factory) were isolated and did not make contacts with other laid off workers. Instead, the path of bilateral agreements between the workers and the company or the Ministry of Labor is preferred. It seems that in most cases the management of the depression/restructuring is of a standard pattern: while precarious workers just get fired, older workers agree to resign and wait for early retirement. Thus, no mass lay-offs are visible while the state "guarantees" these social expenses now, only to announce again the "collapse of the social security system" later - a recurring state motto of the last twenty years - which would entail "new sacrifices" and so on so forth. However, such a trick can prove valuable for the state at the moment, since it can save time and postpone a generalized explosion. But for how long? And how many can be satisfied with such maneuvers?

Actually, while the depression/restructuring is deepening and capital and the state reduce the direct and indirect wage, at the same time that they increase precariousness and lay-offs, they are trapped in a vicious circle whereby they are compelled to let the legitimization crisis deepen even

more. At the same time, as the "war on terrorism" is still going on, trying to deal violently with the accumulated problems of the previous phase of neo-liberal war deregulation, the Greek state that has troops in central Asia is currently "raided" with floods of refugees that itself has contributed to creating. Faced with the nightmare of a new December, fiercer this time as the crisis prolongs, and with the undesired masses of thousands of "surplus proletarians" from Asia and Africa, it has just one card to put on the table: the strengthening of its repressive mechanisms which triggered the December rebellion and created the dangerous mixture of both native and immigrant riots in the first place! However, its recourse to discipline and the intensification of its zero tolerance dogma is inescapable since no social democratic strategies for the extended reproduction of the proletariat can be proposed anymore. Selling "security" to natives against "invading" foreigners used as scapegoats has been the only "social offer" on the part of the state. Indeed, new divisions are on the agenda through the creation of new "folk devils" and "moral panics."

In the beginning of March, after a cop got killed during an armed robbery, many high-ranking police officers warned about the rapid increase of armed robberies since January (almost 40 each month) attributing it both to the release of many convicts, as a measure to relieve the congestion in prisons, and the "disruption" caused in December.

It was then that the launching of new repressive laws, passed just recently, started being discussed. First, in order to "protect police prestige," an old legislation, introduced during the dictatorship in the 30's, was put in practice again against the crime of "defamation of authority." The famous slogan of the rebellion "Cops, killers, pigs" can now lead ex-officio up to a two-year imprisonment. A second legislation targeting the December rebels refers to the "hiding of one's facial features," meaning practically the use of hooded outfits. Together with the formation of new police forces and more regular patrols,

these acts aim at more than a counter-attack on the favorite symbols of the rebellion. The demonization of the "hooded rioters," starting with anti-authoritarians and anarchists, increases separations among the rebels and between the rebels and the rest of the proletarians who remained passive during the rebellion. If the penalties imposed were not that serious, one could be tempted to laugh at the furious effort of the state to deal with a social rebellion on the level of its slogans and dressing code!

Exploiting the generalized sense of social insecurity that the capitalist crisis itself has created, the second "enemy" fabricated by the state are the refugees and illegal immigrants that suffocate in the "hybrid ghetto" of Athens. The repression mechanisms do know that a large part of the revolted multitude that took over Athens' streets those December days and nights, and again in May during a Muslim small scale riot, consisted of immigrants hailing from the nearby neighborhoods. This "ghetto," mainly situated within the historical inner city, resembles the American ghettos, in aspects such as the "vertical segregation" among inhabitants, in other words the non-uniform social character, or the policies of "planned shrinkage." It also resembles the west-European working-class suburbs, in aspects such as the multiracial/ethnic mixture. The above mentioned similarities, or better said analogies, should of course be treated with caution, especially due to the rather large scale differences. A media barrage full of passionate articles and heart-breaking TV reportages, focusing on the environmental and financial degradation of the inner city neighborhoods, which was mostly related to the uncontrolled, unorganized housing of thousands of illegal immigrants, the presence of junkies, prostitutes and other "lumpen" proletarians, signaled the first phase of this new warfare. It should be noted though, that this media barrage had started a bit before December's uprising.

The second phase was far more direct and violent. Physical attacks on immigrants and people supporting them by members of a neo-Nazi group were coupled with massive arrests by the police which led to imprisonments and deportations. Local assemblies of right-wing

"indignant citizens" and petit-bourgeois merchants, organized by the only parliamentary ultra-right wing party, have protested against the presence of immigrants in their neighborhoods and have even taken direct action against them, as in the blockage of one local playground, where lots of immigrant children used to play while their parents hung around. Moreover, under the pretext of "public health protection" lots of old and/or abandoned buildings in the inner city area where thousands of immigrants are lodged had been registered and then evacuation orders were issued. Here, the constant "clean sweep operations" against immigrants and "lumpens" in the centre of Athens, must also be seen as an effort to gentrify those areas in the "historical centre" that still remain "undeveloped" and resist turning into expensive, sterile, museum-like non-places, like in most West-European cities.

Apart from all this, the Greek government has also announced that it plans to construct 11 "concentration camps" all over the country, similar to those already established in Italy, where arrested immigrants will be detained while waiting their deportation. Quite recently, it has passed a new legislation whereby the time of detaining illegal immigrants until deportation raises to 6 or 12 months and any foreigner who is charged with committing a crime that carries a prison sentence of three months or more can be deported immediately, classified as "dangerous for public order and safety."

The recent speech of the Greek prime minister, who linked "criminality" to "illegal" immigrants and "hooded rioters," points to a continuation of the – already failed – neoliberal management of the crisis; the reinvention and demonization of the "dangerous classes" is to be used as a weapon for the further division and discipline of the proletariat in order to accept the deterioration of its living conditions because of the restructuring. However, the list of "criminals" may broaden dangerously and include in the near future those who were just "sympathetic" towards the rebels in December. Since the "social contract" has been breached but no return to the previous social democratic strategies appears on the horizon, the capitalist social relation cannot be adequately reproduced and maybe

those "sympathizers" will have millions of reasons to prove right the fears of the planetary bosses about the December rebellion as a prelude to a generalized proletarian explosion in the course of the global crisis of reproduction.

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*Cops, Killers, Pigs!* Both young and old harangue the police – enforcers of the laws of capital, murderers in uniform.

**For more information on the current situation in Greece (and if you have the patience, archived articles) visit:**

Athens Indymedia (in English) - [athens.indymedia.org/?lang=en](http://athens.indymedia.org/?lang=en)

After the Greek Riots – [www.occupiedlondon.org/blog](http://www.occupiedlondon.org/blog)

Libcom News - [libcom.org/news](http://libcom.org/news)

Infoshop news - [news.infoshop.org](http://news.infoshop.org)

Social War in Greece – [greeceriots.blogspot.com](http://greeceriots.blogspot.com)

**Also, see**

*Greek Fire: From Riot to Social Rebellion* by Collective Reinventions  
[www.collectivereinventions.org](http://www.collectivereinventions.org)

Global map of Greek solidarity demonstrations  
[www.greeksolidaritymap.blogspot.com](http://www.greeksolidaritymap.blogspot.com)

