

(Once again) the truth may be bitter, but it has to be told

Many progressive people in Greece actually believe that detention centers were shut down by SYRIZA, that there are no dead immigrants in the Aegean, that the country is once again flooded with refugees but the kind Greek people, despite the crisis, are helping them.

In the beginning of July 2015, the government tried to turn attention from the bail out program and focus on the refugees' crisis announcing that 77,000 refugees have entered Greece from the beginning of the year. Of course the Greek government was dealing with the problem in a democratic way and Greek volunteers were helping the poor refugees. They neglected to mention the fact that the same number of refugees has entered Hungary through the "West Balkans" route in the same period. The very days before the *plebiscite* (July 5, 2015) 1,500 refugees blocked the international Thessaloniki-Belgrade railroad line on the borders with Rep. of Macedonia for 1.5 days, but nobody reported the event in Greece (in Serbia it was said that the railroad was closed for maintenance).

In the beginning of August the government announced that 50,000 refugees crossed the Greek-Turkish borders in July only — what they didn't say is that 1,500 refugees are leaving Greece daily.

In mid-August, as elections started to become a certainty, SYRIZA tried to restore some of its radical appearance, by pausing the construction of the goldmine in Chalkidiki and by stating that the main issue during the pre-election period will be the immigrants'/refugees one. Of course, if your opponents are using fascist rhetorics, then you must be an antifascist, isn't it so? Well the "mass population management" of people, the dehumanization and victimization of immigrants/refugees and the outcome of treating voiceless people with western democratic charity is the other face of racism. The choice to transfer refugees from Pedion tou Areos park to an "open camp" in Athens, the overcrowded Aegean islands and the use of El. Venizelos boat to remove some of them was portrayed as "antiracist humanitarianism", only to lead in Rep. of Macedonia shutting down the borders on August 21, (the day that journalists in Greece actually discovered that during the last month 39,000 refugees, most of from Syria, have been registered passing through Rep. of Macedonia).

As far as the "kind help of the Greek people" is concerned, it has to be mentioned that from June 24, when Greek government halted five months of negotiations, until July 13, when the SYRIZA-led government of Greece accepted a bailout package that contains larger pension cuts and tax increases than the one rejected by Greek voters in the referendum (the only ones who don't face pension cuts are the police...), 70% of the income for Greek Aegean Sea ferries came from Syrian refugees paying their fare for the trip from the islands of Lesbos and Kos (mainly) to Pireaus. During June and July locals in small Greek islands were renting rooms to Syrian refugees in prices higher than the ones for tourists. Actually, during the days that the banks were closed in Greece, the only cash was the money Syrian refugees were paying for boat tickets, rooms, food, smugglers, and also for buying sleeping bags, tents and... bicycles!

Yes, bicycles... On the Idomeni/Gevgelija border Syrian refugees were paying up to \$225 to buy second-hand bicycles in order to take advantage of the 72 hours' temporary asylum that Rep. of Macedonia is giving them in order to cross the country. Then bicycles were collected at the borders with Serbia and returned to Idomeni/Gevgelija border, to be sold again and again. This dangerous trekking along major roads and railway lines, has cost the lives of 14 Afghans and Somalis who were struck and killed by a train in April.

Now refugees in Rep. of Macedonia are using public transportation — two trains departure daily from Gevgelija station, making the number of refugees entering Greece the same as the number of refugees leaving Greece.

But nobody speaks about this. We are hearing once again that Greece is taking the heaviest burden of all EU countries, but instead of fascist hate, this time the lie is combined with democratic philanthropy.

After April 2015, when more than 1,000 migrants died in the Mediterranean in a single month, the main entrance to EU is the “West Balkans” route. Every day, some 1,500 mostly Afghan and Syrian refugees stream through the woods from Serbia into Hungary. The later, already initiated a 110 mile, 13 foot-high border fence project.

Greece is just a passage in this route, a passage from which some are trying to get easy cash and others to collect some political gains.

Actually, the reality about the Greek hospitality became clear when Syrian refugees (mainly) set a campament in the central “Pedion tou Areos” park in Athens, trying to find smuggler contacts for the rest of their travel towards Europe (the smuggling fee from Turkey to Germany is approximately \$4,000). Social centers and squats filled the gap of the government inactivity, until all refugees were moved (on August 16) to a more distanced area. This solidarity activity didn’t prevent police from demolishing Centaurus squat, where clothes and food for the refugees were gathered...

Schematic outplan of how the Greek state has dealt with immigrants

1. “Old school of capitalism” era: from the beginning of the ‘90s up to Athens 2004 Olympic games. Brutal exploitation of cheap labor (mainly of Albanian immigrants).
2. The Invisibles: mainly refugees from the “wars on terror” in Iraq and Afghanistan and the IMF “structural adjustment” plans in Africa. People “caught in revolving doors”, aka in the huge Greek human smuggling industry, with over 2 billion euros annual fiscal circle. This era lasted from 2002 to 2010.
3. After the 2010 crisis in Greece: Scapegoating. Creation of an enemy within, to boost xenophobic sentiments and help create a fascist “movement” to counterbalance the rising social movement after the imposition of austerity.
4. After the SYRIZA victory: Invisible again, and a laundry for democratic philanthropy.

SYRIZA: All Quiet on the Immigrants’ Front

Shortly after SYRIZA victory in the elections, a revolt burst out in Amygdaleza detention center (February 2015), as an immigrant that was held for 18 months, then released, then arrested again, committed suicide (another immigrant suicide took place in a Thessaloniki police station the day before). The two suicides, added to the death of a 23 years-old Afghan caused by lack of medical care in Amygdaleza detention center, forced Public Order Minister Yiannis Panousis to promise that SYRIZA government would shut down the infamous detention center at Amygdaleza “in 100 days”, a promise that created relief back then, but was never kept.

Another refugee, Mohamed Kamara from Guinea, 21-years old, died in Police custody on February 27, due once more to lack of health care (he was a diabetic patient denied treatment).

On March 17, 300 immigrants and refugees held in Korinthos detention center went on hunger strike.

On March 24, immigrants detained in Paranesti detention center went on a hunger strike that lasted for almost three weeks.

On April 14, a minor refugee held at immigrants’ detention center in Vathy Samos, initially attempted to commit suicide by cutting his wrists and then set fire to the prison chamber, which was completely destroyed.

On July 13, immigrants in Anygdaleza detention center set fire to bed mattresses in five different containers, in protest for months-long inhuman detention.

On July 24, as thousands of refugees from Syria were (and still are) piled in Kara Tepe informal concentration camp in Lesvos island, a Syrian refugee just died, as there is no medical care there... In the month of July there were smaller and bigger revolts in Lesvos island. On August 10, Kos island police used batons and fire extinguishers to break up 1,500 strong refugee protest at the football stadium where refugees were held. After this event, a boat is used to “host” refugees, away from tourists’ sight.

Death in the sea

Up to 70 immigrants have died in the Aegean Sea in 2015, in 10 confirmed shipwrecks: near Symi island, on February; outside the Turkish coast of Datca, on April; near Rhodes island, again on April; in the Aegean Sea off western Turkey, on June; near Çanakkale, on July; up to 19 people are feared to have drowned near Agathonisi island on July; four shipwrecks were reported in August. It has to be mentioned that up to 184 immigrants died in the Aegean Sea in 2007, which was the deadliest year, but nobody spoke about this then. Actually in the same year the ProAsyl report “The truth may be bitter, but it has to be told” (confirming tortures and deadly push-backs by port police in the Aegean) was made public, but didn’t catch attention.

Numbers of asylum seekers during the last years

The decline of the number of undocumented migrants entering Greece since the beginning of the capitalist attack known as “the crisis” until the new rise in the number of entries because of the war in Syria was 80%. In 2008 more than 120.000 *sans papiers* crossed the Greek borders. This number had already fallen to 40-50.000 by 2012. After the launching of the “Xenios Zeus” operation in Greek cities and the “Aspida” (=Shield) operation in the Evros region, this number has fallen below 20.000. In other words, the number of undocumented migrants entering Greek territory had been in sharp decline before the launching of the anti-immigrant police operations.

More than 600,000 Albanians fleeing the poverty in their homeland have come to seek their fortune in Greece, according to official estimates. But since Greece’s debt crisis deepened, about 180,000 Albanians have returned home.

The decrease in the number of undocumented migrants entering Greece and the increase of immigrants leaving Greece was not due to “anti-immigrant policies”. It was the effect of planned economic disaster.

It has to be stressed that, despite leftist obsession on identifying Dublin Regulation as the main reason for the “immigrants’ issue” in Greece, during the last few years (since 2011), due to a number of international court decisions against Greece on issues of the treatment of asylum seekers, almost all EU countries have suspended the return of asylum seekers according to the “Dublin III Regulation”. These decisions concluded that Greece was not implementing a “fair and efficient asylum system”, resulting in long-lasting uncertainty to asylum seekers, and because the living and detention conditions of asylum seekers were inadequate.

The numbers of refugees entering Greece started rising again in 2014 and climaxed in 2015 (although, as noted above, the vast majority of these people leave Greece immediately). Very few people entering Greece apply for asylum and very few of them are granted with refugee status.

According to data by Eurostat in 2013 Greece registered 13,080 asylum applications, and approved 430, granting 255 with refugee status, 175 with subsidiary protection and 70 for humanitarian reasons. In 2013, 435,000 asylum claims had been filed in total in the 28 EU member-states.

In 2014, by far the highest number of asylum seekers from outside of the EU-28 was reported by Germany (203,000), which was two and a half times as many as the number of applicants in Sweden (81,000)¹.

In the same year in Greece 7,665 asylum petitions were examined, 5,785 were rejected, 805 people were given refugee status, 295 subsidiary protection and 775 were granted asylum on humanitarian reasons.

During the first three months of 2015, 185,000 first time asylum seekers applied for protection in the European Union, almost stable compared with the last quarter of 2014 but up by 86% compared with the first quarter of 2014².

302,415 asylum seekers have already been registered in Germany between January and July of this year.

Turkey “hosts” 1.8 million refugees from Syria alone. In Lebanon there are more than one million Syrians. Even Iraq, struggling with a war of its own, is home to more than 200,000 refugees from Syria.

During the first three months of 2015 in Greece there were just 2,610 first time applicants.

The return of deadly push-backs (info from an Alarm Phone Press Release, 5th of August 2015)

Many hoped that with SYRIZA in the government, deadly push-backs in the Aegean would stop. Recent evidence shows attacks on migrant boats in the Aegean Sea where engines were removed and boats punctured by coastguards. In the past two weeks, the Alarm Phone was alerted by refugees to four different distress situations in the Aegean Sea. They had encountered masked special units of coastguards who attacked them in the middle of the sea, between Turkey and the Greek islands. Their boats had not been in distress before, they might have been able to reach a place of safety on their own! After the attacks, they were left alone on drifting and/or sinking boats for hours until the Turkish coastguard came to their rescue. Between the 26th of July and the 1st of August, the attacks took place in different locations: near the islands of Lesbos, Samos and Chios.

Four Alarm Phone cases:

26.7.2015, Chios, engine was taken away and boat was pushed back, see:

<http://watchthemed.net/index.php/reports/view/183>

27.7.2015, Lesbos, two groups in distress in the Aegean Sea near Lesbos, rescued by Turkey, one boat punctured by Greek coastguard, see:

<http://watchthemed.net/index.php/reports/view/183>

31.7.2015, Samos, distress after stabbing of the boat, see:

<http://watchthemed.net/index.php/reports/view/189>

1.8.2015, Lesbos, distress after taking away the petrol, see:

<http://watchthemed.net/reports/view/192>

1 In Italy there were 65,000 applicants, followed by France (64,000), Hungary (43,000), the United Kingdom (32,000), Austria (28,000), the Netherlands (25,000) and Belgium (23,000) followed. The total number of persons seeking asylum in these nine Member States accounted for 90 % of the EU-28 total in 2014.

In absolute numbers, a total of almost 104,000 persons were granted refugee status in the EU-28 in 2014 (first instance and final decisions), nearly 60,000 subsidiary protection status, and just over 20,000 authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons.

2 The highest numbers of first time applicants were registered in Germany (73,100 first time applicants, or 40% of total first time applicants in the EU) and Hungary (32,800, or 18%). They were followed at a distance by Italy (15,200, or 8%), France (14,800, or 8%), Sweden (11,400, or 6%), Austria (9,700, or 5%) and the United Kingdom (7,300 or 4%). EU Member States made 121,600 first instance decisions. Among them, 46 % were positive (i.e. granting a type of protection status). Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy issued the most total first instance decisions in the first quarter of 2015 (48,600; 17,000; 12,600; 10,600 respectively).

Lots of money

During 2007 and 2013 Greece received 374 million euros from EU, in the context of EU “SOLID” program (Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows Program). Out of the whole amount, 331,182,735 euros were handled to Greek police force, who didn’t even announce how 162 million euros were spent (the rest were used for “police expenses”).

In the same period, Greek police received 100 euros daily for each immigrant held in a detention center. The actual amount of money used daily for each detained immigrant was... 1.5 euros!

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) was set up for the period 2014-20, with an initial total of 3.137 billion euros for the seven years. According to EU announcement, “It will promote the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration”. The amount of money was recently risen to 9.2 billion euros, of which Greece will be handled 460 million euros.

To this, you have to add the profit created by the smuggling industry, which, according to a recent semi-official estimation (www.balkananalysis.com) exceeds 2.2 billion euros annually: “[E]ach of the 90,000 average annual migrants [have] generated some (...) 1.8 billion euros in all [of gross labor product into the shadow economy, in both illegal and legal sectors], and not even counting the vast amounts of cash (paid or to-be paid) in transfers outside the country at the entry stage or remittances. (...) [A]t least half of the[se] immigrants manage to “escape” each generating an additional 5,000 euros per head for services to exit-route smugglers and the other auxiliary sectors mentioned. That is an additional 450 million euros, bringing the grand total of the human trafficking sector in Greece to approximately 2.2 billion euros annually. And even this estimate is a very conservative one, considering that the revenue breakdown concerns just the annual ‘new crop’ of migrants, without accounting for the pre-existing and “trapped” ones.”

Number or fascist attacks in Greece (2012-2014)

In 2012 more than 500 racist attacks were recorded, mainly between May and June elections.

A 19 year-old Iraqi boy was murdered at the center of Athens in August 2012, a 31 year-old Egyptian citizen who died after 17 days in coma after being savagely beaten and Shehzad Luqman, a 26 year-old Pakistani was fatally attacked by two people near the area of Petralona on January 17, 2013 and some days later, the Senegalese street vendor Babacar Ndiaye died after being chased by municipal police.

The Racist Violence Recording Network report for 2013 recorded 166 incidents of racist violence with at least 320 victims: 143 incidents were committed against immigrants or refugees, while the other 22 were committed against LGBT persons. The number of victims is significantly higher because of the recording of the incident of labor exploitation linked with racist motive in Nea Manolada, where 155 victims were shot and 35 of them hit by the supervisors of their employers.

During 2014 the same Network recorded 46 attacks on immigrants and 32 attacks on LGTB people.

On the rise (and fall) of nazis in Greece

In Greece there has always been a percentage of far-right voters and patriotic discourse has always been an ingredient within all political spectrum - but these are not the reasons for the rise of the nazi

party. Anti-immigrant politics spread throughout the whole Greek society since 1990 is one major reason, the ground for the hate seed to grow. But the main reason is the orchestrated attempt to create a counterbalance for the combative social movement that appeared in Greece from December 2008 up to February 2012. First the ministers of the socialist party PASOK and then their colleagues from the right-wing New Democracy party started using open fascist rhetorics, identifying immigrants as the major threat to Greece, and not austerity³.

Then refugees were piled up on the streets of central Athens neighborhoods, creating conditions of humanitarian crisis. Then the mass media started to shamelessly advertise nazi party members, transforming them into pop idols. They were “The Untouchables”, that would punish those who betrayed Greece, the nazis’ strength was proven by their attacks on immigrants, attacks that were not hidden, but publicized. (for more on how the fascist movement was manufactured, see October 2012 Clandestina text “WHEN THE INVISIBLE HAND OF THE MARKET RISES IN A NAZI SALUTE” <https://clandestinenglish.wordpress.com/2014/02/23/when-the-invisible-hand-of-the-market-rises-in-a-nazi-salute-2/>)

The scapegoating of the immigrants had as a result the creation of a “fascist movement” that the social movement had to deal with, thus limiting the activity against austerity or for organizing horizontal solidarity structures.

The creation of “fascism on the streets” was followed by an openly advertised state of exemption, having as flagship the creation of detention centers / concentration camps for immigrants. This was an attempt to restore the power of the state. (for more on this, check October 2013 Clandestina text “CONCENTRATION CAMPS: the return of totalitarianism” <https://clandestinenglish.wordpress.com/2014/02/23/concentration-camps-the-return-of-totalitarianism/>).

The “nazi reign” ended with Pavlos Fyssas murder, on September 18, 2013. Greek society, who until then was giving over 20% to the nazi party in election polls, could not tolerate the murder of a young, working class, hip-hop musician and Greek national (three immigrants were already murdered by nazis, without big reactions). The government, for its own reasons, attacked juridically the nazi party after Fyssas murder, mass media stopped supporting them and the spectacle of nazi strength was scattered in the stormy wind as anarchists were chasing and beating nazis all over Greece.

Scapegoating of immigrants continued but on a lesser degree. While on the peak of anti-immigrant hysteria, in the summer of 2013, there were 7,000-10,000 detained immigrants, just before the 2015 elections (January 25) there were 4,500 detainees. Shortly after SYRIZA victory in the elections and the deaths of immigrants in detention centers, this number fell below 2,000. But is steadily rising again. Though there are no official data, the situation in some detention centers is known thanks to contacts with detainees: In Amygdaleza 500 immigrants are imprisoned. Hundreds of immigrants are imprisoned in Xanthi and Paranesti detention centers. Samos immigration detention centre, which has a reported capacity of 280 people, was holding up to 600 refugees in June and Chios detention centre’s capacity of 208 people was exceeded by more than 300 people (on the back-and-forth of SYRIZA politics concerning detention centers, see Clandestina March 2015 “the government says: ‘sans-papiers will not be arrested at the border’ and then denies it”, <https://clandestinenglish.wordpress.com/2015/03/05/a-comment-on-recent-events/>).

3 On August 4th, 2012, Greek institutional racism celebrated the anniversary of the 1936 military dictatorship by launching the “Xenios Zeus” operation, a spectacular celebration of mass arrests of sans-papiers in the center of Athens... The police operation was named “Xenios Zeus” (what a wicked sense of humor!), after the god who protected strangers in Ancient Greece. The reasons justifying the operation went back to some contested conception of Bronze Age history: “From the Dorian invasion, 4,000 years ago, the country has never accepted such a large scale invasion ... migration might be a bigger problem than the economic crisis” (Nikos Dendias, Minister of Public Order, August 4, 2012). The number of immigrants captured by the Greek police during the “Xenios Zeus” police operation, in the city of Athens only was **77,526** immigrants. The vast majority of them were “legal” immigrants, the number of undocumented migrants who were actually arrested in Athens was 4,435. This was a huge, military-style manhunt, in every sense of the term.

The softening of scapegoating politics since the winter of 2013 can also be attributed to the fact that a new situation was guaranteeing social peace in Greece. The expectation that a SYRIZA victory would solve all problems demobilized the social movement (the case of the struggle in Chalkidiki is the most evident example of this). In a way, the fake hopes of electoral politics completed the attack on the radical movement that started with the manufacturing of the “fascist movement”. Now the majority of the population has accepted that 2015 Greece (and the future Greece in general) will never be the same as the relaxed consumerist society of 2007. The problem is that the social movement in 2015 is also not the same as the social movement in 2009-2011. All have to start again from scratch.

Immigrants were made invisible by electoral politics

The 2011 “*Movement of the Squares*” in Greece practically excluded immigrants.

Speakers from the 300 immigrants hunger strike (January 25 - March 8, 2011) were not invited there, neither the strike of the Egyptian fishermen (January - April 2010) was presented, neither the struggle of Bulgarian immigrant Kostadinka Kuneva and her Union of Cleaners and Domestic Workers (PEKOP).

The Greek “indignados” Square Movement was dominated by Greek flags and “independent” “radical personalities” that later became SYRIZA government ministers.

Back then and before January 2015 elections a certain tendency of leftists were openly supporting SYRIZA. The same leftist antiracists were reassuring internationals that SYRIZA would shut down detention centers, tear down Evros fence, legalize immigrants *en masse* etc.

Were they pushing SYRIZA to the Left or merely supplying the party with arguments to pose as radical? Well now that everybody knows how radical SYRIZA really is, the answer to the above question is quite an easy one.

On immigrants’ self-organisation and groups in solidarity to immigrants

Many second generation Albanians participate in the libertarian movement, not in the form of separate immigrants organizations, but rather in the same way Greeks do (although with much more difficulties, as even second generation immigrants can be deported if arrested).

The majority of immigrants we knew (and worked with) have left Greece, because of the “crisis”. Ahmed Moavia, president of the (moderate) “Greek Forum for Migrants” believes that “more than 60% of the immigrants living in Greece have already left the country” (May 20, 2015 interview).

The biggest self organized immigrants’ struggle was the 300 immigrants’ hunger strike in 2011. Before this, it was the Egyptian fishermen strike in 2010. In April 2013 we had the strike of Manolada Bangladeshi strawberry pickers strike, which ended when immigrant workers were shot by bosses. On July 2014, around 800 mainly Pakistani migrant fruit pickers went on strike in the Greek town of Skala, Lakonia, in the Peloponnese. Having support only by a local group called “Autonomous Intervention against Oblivion,” and faced with the “sonorous absence of SYRIZA and the KKE (Communist Party of Greece)”, the strike ended after one week.

In 2013, 2014 and 2015 there were many revolts and hunger strikes in immigrants’ detention centers.

On March 31, 2012, immigrants from 8 countries organized the “Sans Papiers - 1st open rendezvous of undocumented” event in Rotunda square in Thessaloniki but the second one never took place as many of the organizers left Greece.

Demonstrations were initiated by immigrants (in Thessaloniki on February of 2013 as a response to the death of Babakar N’Diye as well as in April of 2013 for the incidents in Manolada).

The oldest autonomous self-organized immigrants group in Greece is the Migrants’ Forum in Crete (<https://fmkritis.wordpress.com/>).

In Ioannina city an assembly of immigrants called *Les Nomades de la Cite* is active lately.

We must also mention the “Assembly of immigrants and solidarians of ASOEE” which organized events in March and April of 2015 under the slogan “WE BREAK THE FEAR | WE GO OUT IN THE STREETS” (<https://immigrants-asoe-en.espivblogs.net/2015/04/06/video-photos-from-the-demonstration-on-4-4-2015/>). This assembly started as antiauthoritarians were fighting together with immigrant street vendors against the police outside the Economy University of Athens (ASOEE) and evolved into a common project.

Other specific and constant antiauthoritarian groups dealing with immigrants’ issues are: “MUSAFERAT - collective against detention centers” in the island of Lesbos (<http://musaferat.espivblogs.net>) and the No Lager assemblies in Athens (<https://nolager.espiv.net/>) and Thessaloniki (<https://nolagerthess.espivblogs.net/>).

Many squats and anarchist social centers throughout Greece work together with immigrants, i.e. in Athens, Chania (and other towns in Crete island), Patras, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, etc with much work to be carried out recently by the comrades of Kilkis (near the borders with Rep. of Macedonia) and Lesbos island.

Recently, many squats and social centers in Athens were providing active solidarity to the Syrian refugees in “Pedion tou Areos” park (preparing meals, providing clothes and hygiene etc).

Many leftist groups around Greece and some immigrant activists are connected with the “Network for the Social Support to Immigrants and Refugees” (<http://migrant.diktio.org/>), that also has close connections with fractions of SYRIZA.

Some immigrants activists have relations with KEERFA (<http://www.antiracismfascism.org/index.php/other-languages>) an organization connected to the trotskyist SEK (Socialist Workers Party) and the ANTARSYA far-leftist coalition.

AK (Antiauthoritarian Movement) has participated in or organized itself antiracist actions, with more recent one the mobilization against Evros fence (May 2015) and most notable ones the No Border Action in Bulgaria and Greece (2005) and the Patras No Border Camp in 2008.

Nevertheless, the above mentioned activities (although might appear numerous), do not represent the capacities of the movement in Greece. In the past years, as parts of it were adopting populist rhetorics and/or getting close to the SYRIZA party, solidarity to immigrants was getting less important or transformed into charity. We should mention again that immigrants were deliberately kept away from the discourse in the squares’ movement, there were few actions (if any) to support the 2013 immigrant uprisings in detention centers, for many people combative antifascism started after the murder of Fyssas and not as a response to the immigrants murdered by fascists, and, moreover, when it became obvious that SYRIZA would win the elections, the majority of the Left got obsessed with electoral politics forgetting everything else, while, in the same time, many antiauthoritarians were focusing on solidarity economy projects and direct democracy, forgetting solidarity to immigrants, the same time that detention centers were used as the main governmental propaganda tool (2012-2013), and horrific events took place, like the shootings of immigrant strikers in Manolada (April 2013) or the crime in Farmakonisi (January 2014) where there was clear evidence of Greek coast guard complicity in the deaths of three women and eight children from Afghanistan (http://www.proasyl.de/en/news/news-english/news/analysis_by_pro_asyl_regarding_the_death_of_eleven_refugees_near_the_island_of_farmakonisi/).

The “others” are ourselves - or we are nothing

It is time for immigrants’ solidarity to be articulated with all social struggles (i.e.: first degree worker unions, neighborhood assemblies, social centers and squats, the self-managed factory of VIOME, the struggle against goldmines in Chalkidiki, Kilkis and Thrace, self-managed cooperatives, networks of exchange, solidarity kitchens etc) — or else these social struggles, unrelated to immigrants’ rights, will have no meaning.

PARALLEL NOTES

Below some notes as a general framework to the ways in which we have thought of discussing this: First of all, one of the problems of the movement in grasping the issue of how immigration is dealt with in Greece has been that laws and regulations had little to do with reality. The largest part of the management of immigration was not carried out by Frontex border control, asylum offices, screening processes and finally intergration legislation or deportation. This might have been partly the issues other European comrades have had to deal with. Yet here Frontex only made an appearance for a short while, asylum-granting percentage was and still is the lowest in Europe- which is related to but not exclusively explained by the fact that Greece is a transit country -screening processes were of the most elementary level and were used to justify a series of detention units, from police stations to military barracks or depots used as prisons for very high detention periods, Finally, deportations were too expensive for the successive greek governments - they chose not to, or were unable to, “absorb” the available resources for immigration control of the European Union (something that seems to be changing now...)

So what people have had to realize is that there is a parallel reality, and also a pattern that has been developing over the last say 20 years. This reality has to do with a huge trafficking and a huge circulation economy. Lately the EU is producing a new kind of anti-trafficking propaganda, combining African piracy with mega-traffickers networks and organized crime. This new legal framework for EU is simply the latest stage in the militarization of borders and offocializing of the vicious circle of killing and charity.

This circle has produced the tens of thousands of dead in the Mediterranean in the last twenty years, an unthinkable scale of casualties that would encourage the use of the terms genocide and world war if they had any meaning left.

Immigrants did not die because the routes they chose were too dangerous or because they were too weak and prone to travel diseases and hadnt takem enough extreme swimming lessons. They died because they were labelled illegal and disposable, guilty of the crime of existence and were condemned to a “potential death”. In other words, in order for Europe to employ its philanthropic so-called salvation operations it had to criminalize migration and most crucially criminalize the people who left warzones or hazardous situations. With “trafficking controls” it is the same logic at work.

The creation of a series of networked or loose trafficking circuits has been a phenomenon of the last twenty years. Its character varies: Each border area and surveillanvce condition is different, Turkey is different than Hungary the Ukraine than Malta. As the routes change, and usually become more risky, the prices change with them. The cheaper a route gets, the more officially ‘legalized’ the passing.

This is the case for example with the border crossing from Idomeni Greece to Gevgelija Rep of Macedonia right now. A relatively cheap passing, with casualties, arrests, beatings by the police and constant refoulements being a constant feature, has now been replaced by an open policy (though not an official and advertized one) of practically pushing out of the country.

In other words the media rhetoric might be shifting towards a more humanistic approach, but this is only because the situation is getting worse with even more refugees forced to leave, with more people in europe realizing that fortress europe is a mass meatgrinder and not feeling so content about it anymore and with the governments alliance having found new ways to deal with it on a communication level. Four recently developed lies:

- the refugee crisis is the fault of IS IS,
- amongst the refugees are terrorists waiting for an opportunity to attack
- most African fishermen are pirates and most pirates are traffickers
- and of course the traffickers the States arrest are the big fish running all the business.

It has been proved that even if one refutes the lies, the propaganda machine is infinitely resourceful. If some years ago, until 2009, immigrants were invisible, when a diversion was needed from the tremendous social unrest in Greece, suddenly they became too visible...the rhetoric shifted and they were suddenly too many, from which later followed too dirty, then too sick to have them around. It is no surprise then that in the 2012 elections most of the votes of the Neonazi Party came from areas where immigrants were virtually of a minimal number. In other words, populations that had actually coexisted with immigrant groups were less inclined to believe they are the cause of any problem, and perhaps more aware that the enemy is to be sought elsewhere. So voting for nazi and having an immigrant-connected overpopulation or criminality or unemployment problem were not linked in any direct way.

On the issue of unemployment, class unity and solidarity and reductionist class analyses that have been on the rise again, see our brief comment below on the greek working class. A very important fact to note here, in relation to things being said and not said or reversed: Immigrants did not have to leave Greece because of fascist attacks. (What we hear about arson attacks by German fascists against refugee centers is foreign to what immigrants experience here).

Violence has of course been extreme and is still going on. From the border patrol to the detention guard, the judge and the street cop to the so-called common employer in the fields or the shop or so-called "citizens committees" in Athens, all displayed the capacity of this society to attack for no reason, lie to and leave unpaid, exploit, beat up, treat like waste, kill and go unpunished.

The following might be hard to understand for us. But from what people have said, people who have put their life on the line many times for the journey to Europe, maybe the violence they have experienced and have survived through made all this debatably tolerable to an extent. The reason they have been leaving Greece is that they have no job, no vitality and no perspective to find any kind of means of subsistence, much like greeks who have to go because its hard to pay the rent.

Perhaps one should ask. Isn't liberal bourgeois democracy for sans papiers only different from a dictatorship only in that it has laws and a set of rules as a discursive-media smokescreen to a parallel reality going on- and that it has to manipulate the privileged citizens into either agreeing with extreme barbarism or into fearing that it is the only alternative to losing one's own privileges? The liberal democratic system managing people who are not citizens as waste and people who are citizens as quantifiable and flexibly treatable data that can keep companies and their States in power, is merely the flipside of a fascist one- its excuses and rules can be suspended anytime and to that end, words will lose their meaning from one moment to another.

A comment on the Greek working class

If there has been a productive class in Greece in the last decades it has comprised in a large part of the migrants, with and without papers. 10% of the population comprised 60% of the working class from 2000 to 2010. (If we take into account that many were in transit, only passing through the country, this relation becomes 5% - 60%).

If the choice in the last six years had been to create a poor undervalued working class, migrants would be given jobs (underpaid ones), but they weren't. Instead they have been living in a State-, and cop-controlled limbo, that ordered them to come in, stay detained, take a piece of paper allowing them to stay for a month until they find an illicit way to exit the country and, most crucially, to pay their way in, their way out and their stay, as well as all their repeated efforts to move around, in EURO cash that will stay on Greek soil.

The result: Greece has a trafficking economy of 2.2 billion euros annually.

The steady influx of cash all spring and most of the summer (also during the Referendum days and the bank holiday) was from Syrian refugees, and it is characteristic that 70% of tickets on ships in the Aegean were by Syrian and other refugees. [It is interesting that on the weekend of the Referendum, the international railroad connecting Greece with Europe (Greek-Macedonian border) was occupied by a thousand migrants for almost one and a half days, and while the Chinese government issued a complaint because its cargos were not getting through, NOONE, left or right, reported this event in the Press or the media - the situation is strange on certain levels of governability.]

As a result of the destruction of small manufacturing units (1990-2000s) and factories (1970s-1980s), the greek working class is quite small. Instead, there is a large middle class that is being pauperized. So maintaining a greek middle class would mean to maintain a wealthy consumer society, which cannot exist across the whole Euro-zone, as you imply in your opening remarks.

While Greece is decreasing demographically, there is an increase in human surplus. In other words, there are now too many who are neither useful as producers, nor as consumers. Many families live on the pension of one grandfather - it is very true what you say about the family economy.

Of course, there is always the question of how one defines the working class and the proletariat. Now there definitely will be a proletariat, and it will be one with the migrant proletarians. (Or will the latter be thrown out so Greeks take their position in the labor market...? "When you dig someone else's grave, you fall in it yourself": this Greek saying might be appropriate here...)

A comment on the Greek Left

In Greece, the "extra-parliamentary left" is, and has long been, a minority of the social movement in the last at least 15 years (quantitatively speaking - and in terms of its social impact).

The social movement in Greece has been mostly a network of antiauthoritarian, anarchist or autonomist people, groups and actions (and this is true also of people with no declared political "identity": their street tactics, everyday behavior, thought patterns, political actions are influenced by this current - the IRAKLIS hooligans are a good example).

This social movement has little or no reference to the "left", (which is indeed a Greek particularity). (It is true that in the crisis this has changed a bit, and certain groups refer to the left again, but this is mostly a regression.)

The extra-parliamentary left, like Trotskyist groups, Maoists, ANTARSYA and some other groups have always been preoccupied (even when they disagreed) with issues set by the central political scene and in the last years was close to the issues discussed by Syriza (troika negotiations, the currency "dilemma", and patriotism).

Syriza, the whole of the extra-parliamentary left, and the Independent Greeks (the right wing - populist Party now governing Greece next to Syriza) were the ones who saw a great political importance in the 2011 Syntagma Square movement. (It is characteristic that a big part of the anarchist-antiauthoritarian-autonomist movement anticipated the Squares movement's populist and extreme-right wing offshoots).

A comment on SYRIZA-backed struggles and struggles which steered clear of SYRIZA:

Syriza did not speak of the debt colonies, global capitalism, the Third World, only the bad bankers who are targetting the brave Hellenes. It also used projects and ideas of the social movements as its own advertisement a spectacular tool for entering parliament. Solidarity clinics - that had first been set up by antiauthoritarians for uninsured migrants- were used as emblems of SYRIZA's social involvement and migrants disappeared from its focus, SYRIZA-Party-backed antifascist talks at neighborhood assemblies were disguised as organized by the grassroots movement... It created voters and

not members or active supporters. So now it has even less of a social basis and more votes (elections now would definitely give Syriza full government power).

1.

The anti-goldmining struggle was the only struggle that could get 20,000 people out on the streets in Thessaloniki as late as 2013...(see demo 28th of March 2013). It became involved with hopes that a Syriza government would change things, and now it is going downhill.

2.

The same happened with the much smaller movement around ERT, the State TV channel. Syriza reopened the State channel by axing all radical programs and movement spots, and sacking radical journalists. A big part of the journalists were close to Syriza, so they immediately forgot about self-management and solidarity with the radical journalists (the now fired ones, who nevertheless are the reason these other journalists now got their jobs back) ...

3.

The only struggle that was never associated with Syriza is the only one that has survived and is going strong. We are talking about the handful of workers of VIOME, who are still trying to manage production in the abandoned factory, and who have transformed this small effort into a solidarity caravan with many groups, people and movements on their side. (They never believed in Syriza, so their struggle has not been “betrayed”. The lack of illusion is an important weapon in itself)...

Clandestina network, August 2015