

THE REBELLIOUS PASSAGE OF A PROLETARIAN MINORITY THROUGH A BRIEF PERIOD OF TIME

The December rebellion 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 overaccumulation 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 labour 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 capitals and «liberalizing» the markets, by promoting a mixture of neoliberalism and keynesianism through war, by decreasing wages and institutionalising the precarization of labour, 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 precarization 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 labour 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 2006-07¹) 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.² 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 the state surveillance and the deterioration of the work conditions that were more 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.

¹ *The Permanent Crisis in Education* at <http://libcom.org>

² See our chronology of the December events. <http://de.indymedia.org/2009/01/238103.shtml>

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 refrained 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 Greek young 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 labour 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 -armoured 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».³ 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 normalisation –when one deviant individual became the mediator of another deviant individual, a real social being– mediated emotions and thought*

³ TPTG, Blaumachen *Like a Winter with a Thousand Decembers* at <http://libcom.org>. The french translation of this text is included in the book *Les Emeutes en Grece* (Senonevero, April 2009). It's interesting to note that the french term for riot (*emeute*) and *emotion* have the same root in the word *emouvoir* (to move).

and created a proletarian public sphere. This open sphere is the necessary presupposition of the decisive moment of social subversion: the communisation 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 labour-power commodity in a continuously developing capitalist division of labour, 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 labour and a crisis of discipline and meaning in school; in other words, a legitimization crisis that hard hit state education. 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 labour. 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 labour* was given a boost by a significant number of students who already experience directly exploitation and alienation 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 organized⁴ 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 neighbourhoods. 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 neighbourhoods. These assemblies were understood as “neighbourhood 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 ones- 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».*⁵ 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 defence of the occupied spaces in the city as well as the organisation 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 achieved to make the police literally disappear from the streets and to make 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 the proletarian subversive activity, the continuation

⁴ Some of them –expropriations, acts of sabotage, etc– are mentioned in our chronology of the December events, see above.

⁵ *Like a Winter with a Thousand Decembers.*

of which constitutes a threat to the existence of both of them.

The 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 delegitimization 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 police cop, thus relegitimizing the police and the security-surveillance state in general, and, second, on an operational level 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 antiterrorist-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 delegitimization of the security-surveillance state and the gradual weakening of several communal projects in the centre and the neighbourhoods –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 the 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 hitmen 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 antisocial, nihilistic bloodthirst. 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 civilisation» 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 labour –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 *delegitimization* 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 Labour 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 courriers 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 an independent of political influences base unionism 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 of 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 the previous years. 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 their position, from cleaners to journalists, and their labour 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 neighbourhood of the city of Athens, a Bulgarian immigrant cleaner, Kostantina 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's 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 the 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 labour *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 a 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 millions 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 programmes (extremely low paid jobs at 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 there 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.

In certain sectors now the situation is as follows:

In the shipping trade, a lot of sailors have not been paid while their wages will be freezed. The public sector workers will have their wages freezed, 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 often. 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 GNP, has already been hit with high rates of unemployment and a fall of 9% of 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 Labour 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, those 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 manoeuvres?

Actually, while the depression/restructuring is deepening and the 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,⁶ the Greek state that has troops in central Asia is currently «raided» with floods of refugees that itself has contributed in 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 «faking 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 favourite symbols of the rebellion. The demonization of the «hooded rioters», starting with antiauthoritarians 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!

⁶ See our text, *The War on Terror* (2003), at <http://www.endangeredphoenix.com/>

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 neighbourhoods. 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 neighbourhoods, 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-nazist 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 neighbourhoods and have even taken direct action against them, as is the blockage of one local playground, where lots of immigrant children used to play while their parents hanged 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 these, 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 for 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 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 in the horizon, the capitalist social relation cannot be adequately reproduced and maybe those “sympathizers” will have a million 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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TPTG