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# Without You, Not a Single Cog Turns...

The way things are today, only when people are frightened will they take to the streets; and they will come out abruptly, all at once... Then, the KKE will be enlisted to stop them.<sup>1</sup>

This impressively precise prediction was made by an old Trotskyist in a chat over coffee in 2007. In this text, we look into the overt emergence of the KKE as police,<sup>2</sup> this important event of 20 October, its meaning for the development of the class struggle in Greece and how this relates to the development of the crisis.

We begin by attempting a critical reading of the core position that criticises the KKE for ‘betraying the working class’. Those holding this opinion are also dejected that ‘we are bickering among ourselves’. Their stance gives the impression that it overlooks the KKE’s role in the class struggle in Greece. This is not an oversight, however; it is not an omission caused by a lapse of attention. What this viewpoint fails to see is determined by the essence of what it does see, by the structure of its vision and by the very core of its content. Its vision is revolution as the triumph of the working class, as the transformation of capitalist society into a society of workers, that is, the revolution as the KKE also purports to see it (with itself in place of the bosses, of course). That is why this critique accuses the KKE of ‘betrayal’ in the fight towards a *common goal*. It contends that the KKE betrays the common goal of the ‘free’ workers’

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<sup>1</sup> KKE, Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας, the Communist Party of Greece.

<sup>2</sup> It is not only their act to block protesters’ access to Amalias Av. that defines the KKE’s practice as a police practice. There is evidence that, apart from the Parliament, the KKE also guarded the Plexiglas police barrier on V. Sophias St., specifically and separately, i.e. without there being a crowd of ‘civilian’ KKE protesters behind the line of guards.

society, because, through its practice and discourse, it upholds the political form of a workers' state, as opposed to the self-management of production, and, on these grounds, this view objects to the KKE's use of the slogan, 'without you, not a single cog turns—*worker*, you can run things without the bosses'.

It may seem paradoxical at first, but it is this slogan that contains the essence of the events of 20 October. The content of this slogan expresses the KKE's side (not *only* the KKE's though, and this is very important) in the conflict that is historically produced in the current period between the practices of class struggle. A careful reading of this slogan reveals that the word *worker* is the key to the content of the revolution according to the KKE (and not only). This revolution does not abolish the worker as such, it does not abolish the proletariat, it does not abolish the 'cogs', that is, the production of value. On the contrary, it calls on workers to fight (or to align as sheep behind the shepherds, in the KKE's case) so as to carry on being workers, to carry on 'turning the cogs'. The utopian phrase 'without the bosses' means 'by your own initiative', namely with bosses who will also be workers, supposedly their own bosses, or with the 'workers' party' as the boss. Behind the opportunistic adoption of an 'anarchists' slogan' by the KKE, there is the essential point that labour continues to be a separate human activity after the revolution, and everything that entails.

The KKE's defence of the parliament and the police, in this critical moment for capital and the state, from the attacks of a section of the proletariat is entirely compatible with this slogan, even more so because such attacks against the state and property can only become possible with the support of a very large chunk of the proletariat, as it became obvious on 19 October. The defence of labour cannot take place in a historical vacuum—an ahistorical form of work (as is implied by slogans like 'we want work, not unemployment') does not exist—it is necessarily the defence of the specific form that labour has taken in the historical present. Subsequently, the revolution, according to the KKE, will be the restructuring of labour on the basis of its historically determined condition (something already done by the Bolsheviks when they gained power

in Russia, taking part in the proletarian revolution of 1917, as well as by the CNT trade unionists when they took control of the factories after the proletarian uprising in Spain in 1936). If we consider these conclusions alongside the KKE's strategy to claim an ever more important role in working class reproduction, that is, to gain strength as a reproduction mechanism of the capital relation in parallel with the State, or as a 'cog' of the State apparatus in some cases, then, in the context of the growing importance of policing for working class reproduction, it is evident why the KKE must play the role of the police.

So what of those who attacked the KKE? How is it explainable, in terms of the reasoning described above, that a section of those who attacked the red front of the police, which was blocking the way to the khaki front of the police, share a great deal with the KKE's view of the revolution? Is there a point in blaming them for fighting against the KKE over the possession of Amalias Ave. and effectively over the political leadership of the movement? There are grounds for this in part, although there is an error in the content of the question itself (the political leadership of the movement). The meaning of the 20 October events is hidden below the surface of the political dispute. The question of *why this conflict is produced, what its true content is and why this is now the central issue of class struggle in many countries around the world*,<sup>3</sup> can only be answered if one goes beyond the apparent polarity between the left and the anarchists (a polarity of prior revolutions, as '*the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living*'). To go beyond this polarity one has to focus for a moment on the content of the 'anarchist' camp, or the black bloc or whatever one wants to call it (although the difficulty in establishing a name hints towards something already). It is widely known that the subsection of 'those involved in clashes' who

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<sup>3</sup> This issue is so central in Greece that it overshadows a demonstrator's killing by police. The police used so much teargas that they managed to murder one of those who defended the working class by guarding the parliament. In many countries, mainly those in the first zone of capitalist accumulation (the most recent examples occurring in Italy and the USA), this conflict appears in the form of the polarity between riots and 'peaceful' occupations/demonstrations.

organically belong to 'militant anarchist' groupings is now very small and is becoming less and less significant as the crisis deepens. It is also known that, by now, even workers clash with the police—often without their actions being condemned by their unions (see POE-OTA)<sup>4</sup>—as well as the unemployed and even the petit bourgeois (taxi owners) who are proletarianised abruptly. Those who have, one way or another, caused the recent period's riots are NOT organized anarchists in their vast majority, while organised anarchists' influence upon them is minimal and constantly declining. They are a mixed crowd of young (and as the crisis deepens, not only young) proletarians who are precarious or unemployed, or they can be school or university students. Their practices—typically riots without specific demands, occurring both separately and within demand struggles—express the current impasse of demands, the lack of future produced by this crisis, which is a crisis of the existence of the wage and therefore of proletarian reproduction. Those who clash with the police are NOT 'revolutionaries' who do so because they have 'class consciousness'; they are agents of the practices brought on by the exclusion of proletarians from labour, by the violent pushing downwards of the middle strata, by the frenetic course of the crisis of restructured capitalism and the attempt to address it with another round of capital's attacks, which challenge the very existence of the wage. These practices also lead to a dead end, seen from the viewpoint that seeks a strategy towards the victory of the working class and the realisation of a workers' society. It is this impasse that prefigures the overcoming of these practices through the class struggle, an overcoming that will not result from their dominance over other practices but will be produced in the course of their conflictual co-existence with revindictive practices. This overcoming will only be possible at the stage when this conflict does not only reproduce the dynamic of riots that lack specified demands, but also involves taking particular measures. This conflict is produced objectively—any individual choices are overdetermined by the sweeping onslaught of the crisis. This was not then a conflict between anarchists

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<sup>4</sup> Panhellenic Federation of Workers Associations of the Local Government

and the KKE in front of parliament—this is only what is apparent. Such an understanding only serves the special interests of *politically* organised anarchists and of the KKE and their fellow travellers. There will certainly be efforts to extract political value from this by both sides of the conflict, and in the short term they might (both) appear to be successful. There will be quarrelling over who is most concerned about working class unity, with accusations against each other in almost the same terms. However, the development of the crisis accelerates, and the event of 20 October will soon look like an innocent game involving rocks, a couple of molotovs and hundreds of poles with red cloths hanging.

The conflict that, in the terms of political *fetishism*, appeared as a clash between anarchists and the KKE in front of parliament has been produced as an internal conflict of proletarian practices within the entire cycle of struggles that began after the restructuring of the '80s ('90s for Greece); it constitutes the essence of this cycle of struggles, generated and developed by contradictions that are now condensed in the current crisis. This conflict has been produced historically as the outcome of capital's accumulation, of the class struggle, and it is not a result of 'strategies', 'betrayals', 'class consciousness' and other ideologemes. The two camps rapidly created through the condensation of historical time are fluid; what seems to prefigure the revolution, *through the overcoming of its limits* today, will appear divided tomorrow; its internal contradictions, that may not seem so important today, will explode. The deepening of the crisis will lead to practices beyond those of the current 'phase of riots'. The rebels of tomorrow (and that may not be so far away) will be forced to take measures for continuing the struggle that will simultaneously be survival measures, communist measures that will affect the crux of surplus value production and will build new social relations. The contradictions of *militarism* and *sexism*, which necessarily come with riots, will explode in the camp that will challenge the very existence of value. Internal conflicts are coming, new divisions are unavoidable.

We are living in the vortex; there is nothing that can rescue us anymore. Every attempt to understand the structure of current social relations, every attempt to break free from the political conception of the

revolution, which, being a *political* one, belongs to the old world of previous revolutions, will certainly contribute to the critique of this world, which in any case trembles, is under threat, as an ensemble of social relations, of being abolished by the coming revolution.

Agents of Chaos