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Because of the targets of the [Greek] riots, their modes of action, their type of organization, the attack on capitalist society as the reproduction of social relations, the practical production of the moment coercion in the self-presupposition of capital, these riots had as their main content the struggle of the proletariat against its own existence as a class.



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Théorie Communiste

THE GLASS FLOOR

ΜΠΑΤΣΟΙ
ΓΟΥΡΟΥΝΙΑ
ΔΟΛΟΦΟΝΟΙ

Excerpted From
LES ÉMEUTES EN GRÈCE



ThéorieCommuniste

THE GLASS FLOOR

Analysis of the Greek Uprising

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The riots¹ (or the riot, spread out and fragmented in time and space) which broke out in Greece following the murder of the young Alexander on the evening of 6th December 2008, are productive of theory. They are practically – that is to say consciously – the self-understanding of this cycle of struggles in its current phase – they are a theoretical and chronological landmark. With all its limits, this movement is the first proletarian reaction (albeit non-global) to the crisis of restructured capital. In terms of its production of theory, this movement can be considered, more or less arbitrarily, according to six essential characteristics:

11. *Productive labour* is only an abbreviated expression for the whole relation, and the manner in which labour capacity and labour figure in the capitalist production process. (Marx, *Results of the Immediate Production Process*, “Productive and unproductive labour”)

12. The *ilots*, who belonged to ancient populations under the sway of Sparta, were State slaves, attached to the land and obliged to pay ground-rent, granted by the city to specific citizens. They did not have any political rights, but they were numerous and the Spartans feared their revolts.

other man can purchase him. [*in the French edition: C'est le double moulinet du procès lui-même, qui rejette toujours le premier sur le marché comme vendeur de sa force de travail et transforme son produit toujours en moyen d'achat pour le second*] In reality, the labourer belongs to capital before he has sold himself to capital. His economic bondage is both brought about and concealed by the periodic sale of himself, by his change of masters, and by the oscillations in the market-price of labour-power. Capitalist production, therefore, under its aspect of a continuous connected process, of a process of reproduction, produces not only commodities, not only surplus-value, but it also produces and reproduces the capitalist relation; on the one side the capitalist, on the other the wage-labourer. (*Capital*, Volume 1, chapter 23 <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch23.htm>) [translator's note: to learn more about the concept of the "double moulinet", see *riff-raff's* website: http://www.riff-raff.se/wiki/en/riff-raff/introduction_to_riff-raff8]

7. Aghios Dimitros: 5 days; Halandri: 8,5 days; Zografou, in January, occupation of an old municipality café which lasted 12 days, only the occupation of another old municipal café in Nea Smirni is still going on after two months and a half (March 2009).

8. Evaluating the number of demonstrators and, even more, of the rioters among them is, as we know, a difficult exercise. If one compares the figures given in *An updated short presentation of the recent riots...* written in December by TPTG and Blaumachen and those given by the text *Like a winter with a thousand Decembers* written at the beginning of February 2009 by the same authors, one can see significant differences. The 100 000 rioters on the night of the 6th of December (*An updated short presentation...*) become 2000 in the February text; on the contrary the 4000 of the second day become 10 000. On the third day (Monday 8 December), the 1500 rioters of the demonstration which gathered 20 000 people (that number itself did not change) become 10 000 in the February text. For the demonstrations of the following days, the February text does not give numbers any more, and one can suppose that the numbers in the December text are valid.

9. This text has circulated in France with this title, but its exact title is only *An open letter to students*. It was written by a participant in the events in order to reduce the distance between workers and students.

10. GSEE: General Confederation of Greek Workers. It is the unique union central and its leadership is linked to the Greek socialist party.

The praxis and discourse of these riots make of the current crisis of capitalist reproduction a crisis of the future of this mode of production.

The characterisation, in a topology of the reproduction of capitalist social relations, of the moment of oppression and coercion in the self-presupposition of capital.

The question of whether the rioters had a "peripheral" character in relation to a "core" of the working class, that is to say the question of the unity of the class and of its recomposition.

The overcoming of what was the contradictory dynamic of the anti-CPE movement in France, and this bears some relation to the second point.

The overcoming in the struggle of the objectivity of the course of capital and the activities of the classes involved as choices, decisions, tactics, and strategies.

The questioning of the theory of value and of the crisis of the capitalist mode of production in the light of an attack of capital outside of production and the spreading of practices of sabotage.

(some points have been gathered under one chapter)

1. The future

WE CAN OBVIOUSLY REFER TO ALL THE ANALYSES OF THE PERMANENT CRISIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN GREECE (and the recurrence of the struggles that take place there): its increasingly unbearable selectivity, “the intensification of student labour”, the permanent lie about the opportunities it opens up, the fact that from being a “social elevator” it becomes a mere “reflection of injustices and of social cleavages”. Studying becomes purely and simply the acceptance (without compensation) of all the relations of exploitation that give their form and content to the global education system. It is necessary to call all this to mind, and TPTG’s text *The permanent crisis in education: On some recent struggles in Greece* does this very well. But this is not enough – we have to go further. If, in many countries, education happens to be a particularly unstable and restless sector of capitalist society, it is not only because of the “reforms” that the reproduction of capital has imposed on this sector, but because it is *the reproduction of capital that has become problematic*. It is by becoming problematic, that is to say *by being in crisis as reproduction*, that the self-presupposition of capital designates, at first, as the place for the crisis, sectors of society where its reproduction takes a *specified form* in relation to society itself. It affects primarily the “entrants”, and constructs the social category of youth. This crisis of reproduction is concentrated in places specialising in reproduction, designating the precarious youth as its principal actor (the 600 Euros generation) of

gles in their specificity. The revolutionary dynamic of this cycle of struggle is at the very same time its intrinsic limit. The class has no longer any confirmation of its existence for itself in the face of capital. This means that the proletariat produces all of what it is, its whole existence in the categories of capital, and this is why it can abolish it. But radical democratism formalises also the whole limit of the struggles of this period: to fix the existence of the class in capital. All of this is very real in class struggle and there is a *party of the alternative* whose existence becomes the justification of its ideology. For radical democratism, the critique of the capitalist mode of production is limited to the necessity for the proletariat to control its conditions of existence. For this purpose, this social movement finds in the democracy that it calls radical the most general form and content of its existence and its action (management, control). The proletarian is replaced by the citizen and the revolution by the alternative. The movement is large: from forces which only demand an adjustment, capitalism with a human face, to alternative perspectives which see themselves as breaking with capitalism while remaining in a problematic of control and management.

4. Mike Davis here forgets the importance of the clashes between the Black Blocks and the police in the importance and the dynamic of these counter-summits. If it does not change anything to the general analysis presented in this quotation, this lack prevents the understanding of the very contradictions of this period of radical democratism and therefore to understand that, in the current situation, are soon to be overcome *both* radical democratism *and* the autonomisation of the dynamic of this cycle of struggle, that is to say the putting into question of one’s class belonging as something to be realised *in the face of* capital rather than being intrinsic to the contradiction that is exploitation: in both cases another life was possible as an alternative.

5. Mike Davis, op.cit. http://www.flexmens.org/drupal/?q=Griots_De_rellen_in_Athene_als_vonk_die_het_vuur_doet_oplaaien

6. “Capitalist production, therefore, of itself reproduces the separation between labour-power and the means of labour. It thereby reproduces and perpetuates the condition for exploiting the labourer. It incessantly forces him to sell his labour-power in order to live, and enables the capitalist to purchase labour-power in order that he may enrich himself. It is no longer a mere accident, that capitalist and labourer confront each other in the market as buyer and seller. It is the process itself that incessantly hurls back the labourer on to the market as a vendor of his labour-power, and that incessantly converts his own product into a means by which an-

Endnotes

1. The Greek term *εξέγερση* [ekseyersi] was widely used by the participants themselves to describe what was going on, this term can be translated as “uprising”, “rebellion”, “insurrection”, “riot”. “Unrest” is too neutral; “rebellion” does not imply any specific forms of action; “insurrection” is too strong for what really happened in Greece, as what was at stake was never to overthrow the power in place and the relations of production it expresses: there was neither the will, nor the possibility to do such a thing;. “Riot” corresponds to the practical form of the uprising, to its spontaneous character and to the “rebellion” as refusal that manifested itself in it.

2. In restructured capitalism, the reproduction of labour power has been subjected to a double disjunction. On the one hand a disjunction between the valorisation of capital and the reproduction of labour power; and on the other hand a disjunction between consumption and wages as source of income. In this period of the capitalist mode of production, this double disjunction means that demands on wages are not only an obstacle to the maximum valorisation of capital but have also become structurally illegitimate. This is why demands on wages have become the field where the production of class belonging as an exterior constraint can be foreseen and this *at its very core*: the wage relation by which the physical/social existence of the proletariat depends on capital.

3. What we describe as radical democratism does not only designate an ideology (“citizenism”). It is also a praxis whose content consists in the formalisation and fixation of the limits of the current strug-

which the students remained the principal representatives throughout the movement. It is in this regard that the student movement was this *general* movement of riots.

Some Greek texts, like those of TPTG and Blaumachen, speak about university as a “fraction of capital” and consider the universities as work places – and places of exploitation. Consequently, the blockade of universities is understood as a hindrance to general reproduction, if not to production *tout court*, to the extent that the student is considered as the producer of a specific commodity- her labour-power. In such an approach, we should distinguish between what is said and what is implied, that is to say of what such an analysis – theoretically false – is the true symptom.

Unless they are private universities in which particular capitals requiring at least the average profit rate are invested, and in which the student is a consumer who buys the lesson as a commodity, universities are not fractions of capital (even in this case, universities would not be a productive sector). They are an essential function of the production / reproduction of labour-power, but regardless of their *utility*, to the extent that – *via* the state – it is money as revenue that functions here, and regardless of the necessity of the rationalisation of their performance (the less the student dawdles in his studies, the less it costs), they are not capitalist companies, as for any *faux-frais* of production. In studying, the student (we are not speaking here about the fact that “being a student” has become a position on the labour market for precarious jobs: there are “student” jobs, whether they are held by students or not) does not enter into a relation of purchase–sale of their labour-power and produces no commodity containing a surplus-value that her employer (the administration of the university) appropriates. The student must put a lot of herself into the production of her commodity – complex labour power – but she does not buy it from – nor sell it to – herself. As long as this commodity remains attached to his person, pure subjectivity, it does not enter any productive relation with capital. Even if we accepted the idea that the student manufactures a commodity, she would not be a productive worker (productive of capital), but at the most a petty independent producer bringing her commodity to market. We can here point out that this “left-wing idea” of the student as producer of a commodity is a recurring theme of the right-wing: each is the petty entrepreneur of their own person.

In the true self-understanding of the movement as anti-capitalist, what makes of it an anti-capitalist movement – the crisis of reproduction – produces a false self-understanding: the student is a productive worker, and the university is a capital. This “false” understanding is a true symptom of the situation which structures the “student” revolt. The movement did not construct itself as anti-repression, anti-government or anti-university-reform (and in this it breaks with the continuity of the student revolts in Greece). Indeed, in the school and university students’ revolt, it is really the reproduction of capitalist society which is at stake, which is the object of the contradiction. However, as such, this revolt is stuck – despite all the shows of sympathy and solidarity from the “population” – in the institutional forms of this reproduction, as a “breach of contract”, as the failure of a corrupted state under the close watch of the IMF and lying about its own functioning to the European Commission.

The capitalist mode of production itself has *run out of future*.

[What we have seen in Greece] is an original species of revolt, prefigured by earlier riots in Los Angeles, London and Paris, but arising from a new and more profound understanding that the future has been looted in advance. Indeed, what generation in modern history (apart from the sons of Europe in 1914) has ever been so comprehensively betrayed by the patriarchs? [...] My “baby-boom” cohort bequeaths to its children a broken world economy, stupefying extremes of social inequality, brutal wars on the imperial frontiers, and an out of control planetary climate. (Mike Davis, *The betrayed generation*, interview given to a Greek magazine.)

If, in the Western capitalist area, the instances of sharper social conflicts are concentrated on the precarious youth (*united* in the riots in Greece, contrary to what happened in France in 2005 – 2006 between the banlieue riots and the anti-CPE struggle), it is because “youth” is a social construct. It is here that the link between the student movement and the riots lies, and in a totally immediate way, it is the labour contract which summarises this link. The crisis constructs and then attacks (in the same movement) the category of “entrants” depending on the modalities of their “entrance”:

the same lines, Marx says somewhere that one should not take chance into account, because the events which occur by chance, by definition, go in all directions and, at the end, cancel each other; this is true, but within a long series and in the long run). The same can be said about the aggression (at that point) against Konstantina Kuneva and the shooting at the police, which was probably a provocative manoeuvre. It is possible to say that these things have little interest as long as we find ourselves far from them, chronologically or otherwise. But for anybody involved in the events, this position is impossible to hold. In Italy, after Piazza Fontana, the Italicus and Bologna station, it would have been unrealistic to be indifferent to the interpretation of these events. We do not have the possibility to do without a critical and continuous understanding of the course of the events which, before being history, its laws and its necessity, is our unpredictable and ambiguous everyday life. “Provocations” are an ordinary part of the repression and of the management of class struggle by capital and the State. To avoid this type of question is to have a conception of capital in its objectivist virginity, implying that it would content itself simply with being. The process of capital is the process of class struggle and these are composed of living human beings with their decisions, their mistakes, their genius.

To conclude: it might well be that this struggle was not really massive, but unifying; it overcame the internal contradictions of the period of the autumn 2005 / spring 2006 in France. The adherence of many people other than the “enragés” or “direct demonstrators” in their offensive attitude against the cops seen as an “occupation army” and its echo in many places of the world, can indicate that what is at stake in Greece, in this conflict, is widely recognised in the world, that the situation of the Greek proletarians is a general situation in this specific moment when the crisis is clearly breaking out and when the concrete consequences are everywhere to be seen. It is the creation of a common position in the relation of exploitation that did not reach completion during the riots in Greece, but whose dynamic within class struggle was posited: that is, to abolish capital and abolish oneself as a class by acting as a class. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*.

I have utterly no qualification to comment on the specific Greek conditions, but I have the impression that there are important contrasts with France in 2005. Spatial segregation of immigrant and poor youth seems less extreme than in Paris, but job prospects for petty bourgeois kids are considerably worse: the intersection of these two conditions brings into the streets of Athens a more diverse coalition of students and young unemployed adults. Moreover, they inherit a tradition of protest and culture of resistance that is unique in Europe. (Mike Davis, *op. cit.*)

The inclusion of migrant workers in the movement is one of the most significant elements of this historical milestone constituted by the riots in Greece.

As far as immigrants are concerned, Albanians of second generation participated mostly in the attacks against cops and buildings and immigrants of other origin – mostly Afghans and Africans – confined themselves to looting. (TPTG and Blaumachen, *op.cit.*)

The militants of “Athens’ Haunt of Albanian Migrants” distributed a leaflet on the 15th of December at a student picket line outside the police headquarters, stating their share in the riots, “*These days are ours, too*”. The acid attack against Konstantina Kuneva, the Bulgarian union member of a cleaning company that was a little too recalcitrant, during this period of riots, cannot be just a coincidence. For the capitalist class, it is not simply a matter of fighting but also of *punishing*. Eventually, it is the proletariat as a whole that will have to be treated as *ilots*¹² within the capitalist mode of production.

We have to consider seriously the fact that we are engaged in a class struggle which is a large historical movement, with its deep tendencies, its restructurings, its *necessities*, but we are engaged in it *each day as it comes*. It is in the incessant interaction between all these levels, between the specific and the general, that we make our way, that we have to weigh our actions and those of our adversaries. (Along

educational training, precariousness (and those who are in a similar situation- the migrants). The main thing here is the labour contract which places this labour power in its relation to capitalist exploitation at the level of the changing needs of the market, the mobility of capital, etc. It is something that can be seen, in a more or less violent way, everywhere in Europe and in the USA. It is the crisis of reproduction as such that annihilates the future and constructs the youth as the subject of social protest. The future, in the capitalist mode of production, is the constantly renewed reproduction of the fundamental capitalist social relation between labour-power and means of production as the principal result of capitalist production itself. The crisis of financialised capital is not simply the setting, the canvas, the circumstance underlying the riots in Greece: it is the specific form of the capitalist mode of production running out of future, and by definition it immediately places the crisis at the level of reproduction.

The transformation of the student movement into a generalised movement of proletarian riots which took as their target the reproduction of capital as such in what would make this reproduction possible (we will see later that the limits of these riots lies here), that is to say the institutions, the state, the violence, the ideology, exchange, the commodity, has produced its actors from an already existing material. Since the Second World War, the development of capitalism in Greece has been chaotic, destroying previous social relations rather than constructing new ones that would involve and define the whole of society. A good example of this – the entry into the European Union – was, so far, the last step taking place. The Greek bourgeoisie has always shown a faintheartedness, placing it far behind the big capitalist powers (even since “independence”), and has looked more overseas than towards its own national territory. Greek capitalist industry, which first developed under the form of a couple of enclaves most often in the hands of foreign capital (as was the royal family), is now decrepit. Employment relies on the merchant navy, tourism and the construction sector that is linked to it, and administration. The revolt against a capitalism that never allowed it to live properly is intrinsic to Greek society.

The riots of December 2008 stand in the conjunction between this predatory capitalism whose organ is a state run by clientelist mafias, and the crystallisation, which this capitalism creates in the student movement, of a social

defiance built from hatred and contempt. Because, in Greece, the student movement is a “social milieu” that largely goes beyond the situation of students and school children. In such a capitalism, the “margins” of the “600 Euros generation” can quickly come to represent the whole social functioning, especially when they are already organised, like in the Exarchia district in Athens, in a whole network of resistance and alternatives (social centres, printing-houses, cafés, associations, crafts, jumble sales, sewing workshops...), that is to say when they are massive and view capitalism and the state as one would a foreign army of occupation. The riots movement is not a student movement not only because the students and schoolchildren were immediately joined by a whole fraction of the precarious and immigrant population, and benefited from the sympathy and occasional participation of a part of the population, but also because the student movement was *already* not a “student” movement. The student situation is a social and *political* situation; that is to say a conflictual relation to the state, which is at the same time a future exploiter (the administration is almost the only job opportunity opened) but also a potential exploiter, which by turning someone down condemns him to a social *no man’s land*. In this situation, produced by the very functioning of capitalism, the constraint and the exteriority of the capitalist social relation appear as a *state*, a point of departure, rather than as an *activity* (we can see here simultaneously the force and the limits of these riots). The production of one’s class belonging and of the capitalist social relation as an exterior constraint, which is an activity of the class within the relation itself, appear here as a state of exteriority whose only social foundation is violence. It should be noted that the “exteriority” to which we refer is intrinsic to a class activity which includes for the class, against capital, its own putting into question: we are absolutely not speaking here of a militant exteriority, of interventionism or activism. Whatever the specific limits of the movement considered here, it would be completely wrong to apply the schemes of the critique of militantism and interventionism to it.

Logically the targets of these riots were the institutions *where the reproduction of the mode of production acquires a separated form*, separated from the society of which they are the political, economic as well as ideological institutions of reproduction, as well as the forms of *circulation* in which capital returns to itself. When the future is already

power of the proletariat within the capitalist society that would prefigure and prepare its affirmation as the dominant class, generalising its condition to the whole of society). The rioters revealed and attacked the *proletarian situation now*: this labour power that is made precarious around the world, which made the wish to become an “ordinary proletarian” completely obsolete in the very moment when such a demand could have been made. This interweaving between having demands and calling oneself into question as a proletarian, which is characteristic of this cycle of struggle and which can be summarized as class belonging being the general limit of this cycle, reached its climax in the riots of November 2005 because of the particularity of its actors. The demand had disappeared.

Three months later (spring 2006), during the anti-CPE struggle, everybody knew what could emerge from a withdrawal of the CPE: at best, if the unions’ projects had succeeded, a French version of flex-security. Who wanted that? Certainly not the majority of students, precarious workers, and schoolchildren who were in the streets. However, as a movement with demands, that would have been the only outcome. An outcome that the movement could not face. The anti-CPE movement was a movement having demands for which the satisfaction of the demands was unacceptable for itself as a movement with demands. As a movement with demands, the student movement could only understand itself by becoming the general movement of all precarious workers, but then, it would either sabotage itself in its own specificity or have to confront more or less violently all those who, during the riots of November 2005, showed that they did not want to act as a mass to be lead. To make the demand succeed by widening it meant ruining the demand. Who believed in the junction with the November rioters on the basis of a stable working contract for everybody? This junction was on the one hand objectively inscribed in the genetic code of the movement and, the other hand, this very necessity of the junction produced a love/hate internal to the movement, which was objective as well. The anti-CPE struggle was a movement with demands whose fulfillment would have been unacceptable for itself as a movement with demands.

The riots in Greece started where the anti-CPE struggle ended.

4. A historical milestone

DURING THE RIOTS, THE PRODUCTION BY THE PROLETARIAT OF ITS OWN EXISTENCE AS A CLASS DID NOT AUTONOMISE ITSELF IN THE REFUSAL OF THE PROLETARIAN CONDITION, becoming a lifestyle and a precondition for opposing capital, because in it the terms of the struggle against precariousness were united from the start. This is contrary to the situation in France, where these terms divided the anti-CPE struggle in the spring of 2006 in relation to the riots that occurred in November 2005 in the suburbs. In that regard, these riots constitute a historical milestone: they are a clear formulation of the production of a swerve *within* the activity as a class; they are an “overcoming” of the limits of the movements which preceded them; not only are they situated in capital as it arose from the restructuring of the years 1970–1980, but also in the beginning of the crisis of this capitalism.

Because it did not demand anything, the content of the revolt that took place in France in November 2005 was the refusal of the causes of the revolt; the rioters attacked their own condition, they took as their target everything that produces and defines them. This was not caused by an imaginary radicalism which would be intrinsic to the “banlieue kids”. Rather, it is due to the conjunction of two current causes: on the one hand, the specific situation of this fraction of the proletariat, on the other hand, the fact that, in a generalised way, demands are no longer what they used to be (it is no longer the step leading to the growing

looted and when practically and consciously a movement takes place at this level of reproduction, even if the latter remains understood and attacked as structures separated from production, there can be no demands, because there is no longer any alternative and not even the illusion, like in Italy at the same time, that one can exist. It is in this crisis of the reproduction of the social relations that, in the self-presupposition of capital, the moments of *coercion and normality*, of which the riots were not only the update but also practically the *shaping*, are fixed.

The police and the army are the last word in the self-presupposition of capital in the face of resistance to the provisions taken by the capitalist class in the spheres of work, social security (health, retirement...), and education. To be a precarious or migrant worker means, directly in the relation to work, that one must work whenever the boss needs it, must accept to work unpaid overtime and to be fired according to the vagaries of the moment. It also means being beaten up or attacked with acid for a single demand or even complaint. To be a precarious or migrant worker is already to live under a reign of terror, and for a “stable Greek” worker, the terror of work are the “incidents” whose multiplication corresponds to the intensification of exploitation. Absurdly, the wage and the reproduction of labour-power tend to become illegitimate for capital itself (cf “Revendiquer pour le salaire”, *Théorie Communiste* 22)². This is the crisis of reproduction, the running out of future. It is also for the proletariat, in the very objectivity of capital, the reproduction of its class belonging that becomes an exterior constraint in the very relation of exploitation that reproduces it as a class and links it inseparably, as a class, with capital. Everywhere in these riots a feeling is expressed that capital is in “breach of contract”: “Will we earn enough to be able to have children?”

The riots in Greece show the end of the period that started, in the current cycle, with the strike wave in 1995 in France and the “anti-summit” gatherings of the end of the 90s, that is to say the end of *radical democratism*³ as the expression and fixation of the limits of class struggle. No other future is possible, because there is no longer a future: *the alternative is dead*.

Recall the anti-WTO demonstrations and the “Battle of Seattle” in 1999 which opened a new era of non-violent protest and grassroots activism⁴. The tremendous popularity of the World Social Forums, the millions-strong turnouts to protest Bush’s invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the widespread support for the Kyoto Accord – all augured enormous hope that an “alter monde” might yet be born. Meanwhile, the war did not end, greenhouse gas emissions soared, and the social forum movement has languished. An entire cycle of protest came to an end just as the Wall Street boiler-room of globalized capitalism exploded, leaving in its wake both more radical problems and new opportunities for radicalism. The revolt in Athens ends the recent drought of anger. Its cadre seems to have little tolerance for hopeful slogans or optimistic solutions, thus distinguishing itself from the utopian demands of 1968 or the wishful spirit of 1999. This absence of demands for reform (and, thus, any conventional handle for managing the protests), of course, is what is most scandalous, not the Molotov cocktails or broken shop windows. It recalls not so much the student left of the 1960s as the intransigent revolts of underclass anarchism in Montmartre in the 1890s or Barcelona’s Barrio Chino during the early 1930s.⁵

The lack of future lies not only in the disappearance of the promise of a better life, but also in the putting at stake of the possibility of being able to survive and to reproduce one’s own body, as made of flesh and bones. And, wanted or not, proletarians are made of flesh and bones. This is not their fault: to be made of flesh and bones is a completely *social* constraint and a social condition, the proletarian is the first purely physical worker, a subjectivity without object (he has no objective or personal relation to any means of production or subsistence). When the proletariat is attacked in its physical constitution, it is its social definition which is at stake.

At the same time, the “slogans of hope” and “optimistic solutions” are still current in Italy. One can see in this

of exchange, of the division of labour, of all forms of property, the fact that things would be more and more for free, seen as the unification of human activity. These are “measures” that abolish capital and that are imposed by the very necessities of the struggle against the capitalist class. It is this content of the future revolution that, in the current cycle of struggle, the struggles announce each time that the very fact of acting as a class appears as an exterior constraint, a limit to be overcome.)

Self-organisation could be this process to the extent that it is the “refusal of mediations”, but, notwithstanding the fact that what we have here has always been the refrain of the ultra-left, *what announces the rupture is not the refusal of mediations but the putting into question of what makes mediation exist: to be a class.*

In this sense, there was no self-organisation during the riots in Greece. People decided what they wanted to do together, without the collective and/or majority decision being a condition of their actions. As for the teacher and student coordinations, they were purely and mainly places for leftist formal fights; already Blaumachen’s text in 2006 (*Occupation, not democracy!*) mentioned all the suspicion that this kind of organisation now provokes: “The national coordination is a certain political power’s attempt to dominate the movement.” (Blaumachen, *op.cit.*). Nowadays, the multiplication of diverse collectives, which have a hell of a time coordinating their efforts when they want to, shows quite well that class unity is an objectification in capital. It is the exteriority of class belonging which is announced as a present characteristic of the struggle as a class. It is not to say that the more the class is divided, the better it is, but that the *generalisation* of a movement of strikes or riots is not equal to its *unity*, it is not the overcoming of differences that are only seen as accidental and formal. We must start to understand what is at stake in these diffuse movements, fragmented and discontinuous: *the creation of a distance from this “substantial” unity, objectified in capital.* The unity of the proletariat can now only be the activity through which it abolishes itself in abolishing everything that divides it.

How can a “unity” arise, in a general movement of class struggle, that is not in fact a unity but rather an inter-activity? We do not know... But class struggle has often showed us its infinite inventiveness.

only recognise itself as existing in the existence of capital, it is the exact opposite of autonomy and self-organisation which, by nature, take their meaning in a liberation of the proletariat, its affirmation, and, why not (for nostalgics) its dictatorship.

As the proletariat self-organises, it can only do so on the basis of what it is in the categories of capital. It is not a question of the definition of self-organisation or of autonomy, it is about a social process, a process of rupture in the class struggle, the self-transformation of a subject that abolishes what defines it. To say this is a flux, a dynamic, hides the rupture as the transformation of the subject of the struggle that abolishes itself as proletarian, which is therefore no longer the subject that self-organised from its situation as proletarian. If the proletariat abolishes itself, it does not self-organise. To call the movement as a whole self-organisation is to be blind to its content.

It is always possible to hold that self-organisation is the very flux of this change in class struggle. One would first make the rupture disappear, and then split what is homogeneous in the revolutionary activity: the coincidence between the change in circumstances and the activity and change of oneself. Then, the proletariat organises itself but does not self-organise, because the driving force behind this transformation is first and foremost the production of what it is as an exterior constraint: its *raison d'être* outside itself (that is to say capital). When, in the course of the struggle, it is obliged to call into question what it is itself, there is no self-organisation because the course of the struggle confirms no pre-existing subject as it would be in itself outside the struggle. One can speak of the “self-organisation” of the struggle, it does not change anything to the fact that, in their struggle, proletarians find only all the divisions of wage-labour and of exchange, and no organisational form can overcome this division. Only a change in the content of this struggle can do it, but then it is the rupture that consists in recognizing in capital its own necessity as a class (outside oneself), the very opposite of all the “self-...”. One cannot hold, and now this cannot be ignored, that the revolution is the abolition of classes and immediate communisation while still using a scheme that valorises self-organisation as a revolutionary process. (To be specific, what we mean by communisation and abolition of the state is, in the very course of the revolutionary struggle, the abolition of the state,

dissonance a simple effect of the contrasting economic situations in Italy and Greece, where the degree of trust that investors have toward the state has just been downgraded. But tomorrow, Italy could be the scene of a wave of riots similar to Greece and Greece, the scene of a large movement pressing for reformist demands alongside the flowering of grass-roots collectives. We should keep in mind that class struggle is a global – but not homogeneous – process and that struggles do not take place on a chronological axis in which there would be “avant-garde movements” and “anachronisms”. If the situation in which the proletariat acting as a class is in such a contradictory relation to capital that its struggle can be its own abolition, if this situation is the dynamic of this cycle of struggle, it stills develops itself in a chaotic manner. In some places, through wage demands that the capitalist mode of production neither can nor wants to fulfill, in others, through large self-organised grass-roots movements that propose alternatives, and in still others, through riots that produce one’s class belonging as an exterior constraint and the relation of exploitation as a coercion pure and simple. Nobody is ahead of their time; nobody is backward, because nobody is independent.

All the same, in this chaos, all the terms are not identical and do not have the same relation to the dynamic of this cycle considered as a totality. The dynamic of this cycle is the swerve that some current practices create within what is the general limit of this cycle of struggles: to act as a class. Presently, the class activity of the proletariat is more and more torn in an internal way: as long as it remains the action of a class, it has capital as its sole horizon (because all liberation of work and affirmation of the proletariat as the dominant class have disappeared), simultaneously in its action against capital it is its own existence as a class that it faces and that it must treat as something to do away with. The majority of the current struggles have to live through this swerve, this internal split, and the riots in Greece did not escape it.

To act as a class entails a swerve towards oneself, to the extent that this action entails its own putting into question in relation to itself: the proletariat’s negation of its existence as a class within its action as a class (and this is the swerve in the action as a class). In the riots in Greece, the proletariat does not demand anything and does not consider itself against capital as the basis for an alternative, it simply

does not want to be what it is anymore. At the same time, despite its larger scale, and the fact that it put into motion a large part of the working class, the Italian “*Onda anomale*” has to face – if only because of its simultaneity with the riots in Greece – its dead-ends, its lack of perspective. The riots in Greece mean that the *Onda* has no perspectives, does not point to the future of class struggle. Conversely, the very simultaneity of these struggles (Italian or Greek) give to these riots in Greece a meaning they would not have without this simultaneity, that is of pointing out, in the fact of acting as a class, the very nature of the current limits of class struggle within itself considered as a whole.

This entanglement, as swerve, of the elements of class struggle already has a meaning: that of the putting into question by the proletariat of its existence as a class in its struggle against capital. In Greece, the principal content of this putting into question was to show and to shape the reproduction of social relations as including coercion.

not belong to the shop-owners, or the bankers, this wealth is our sweat and blood. [...] A society where everybody will decide collectively in general meetings of schools, universities, workplaces and neighbourhoods

Such a perspective of appropriation not only does not make any sense but is also the most beautiful homage that one could pay to this society (let us not comment on a “society” where there will still be schools, universities and workplaces).

When one listens to the advocates of autonomy and self-organisation, one wonders if their opposition to the unions is a fundamental one, expressing the revolutionary opposition of the proletariat to its “economic” situation, to its status of market “category”, or if it is a “democratic” opposition to the “permanent”, “bureaucratic” and “uncontrolled” character of these organs. We know very well which role these “committees” can have, as they tend to be mere reserve unions when the permanent cops are overwhelmed. Any organisation that is not a moment of the revolutionary overcoming becomes a union, and whether the latter is “temporary”, “democratic” or “dismissible” does not change anything.

The process of the revolution is one of the abolition of what is self-manageable. To conceive the “autonomy of struggle” as the ability to pass from a struggle for demands to a revolutionary struggle is a construction that is not interested in the content of this passage, it remains a formal approach to class struggle. If the content of the passage is left aside, it is because the autonomy prevents the understanding of this passage as a rupture, a qualitative leap. The “passage” would only be an affirmation and a revelation of the true nature of what exists: the proletariat as it is in capital triumphs in the revolution, it become the absolute pole of society. The “leap” is then simply a formality. Of course, when the proletariat self-organises, it breaks with its previous situation, but if this rupture is only its revelation, the reorganisation of what it is, of its activity, without capital rather than the destruction of its previous situation, that is to say if it remains self-organised, if it does not go beyond this stage, it can only be defeated.

During the struggle, the subject that was the subject of autonomy transforms itself and abandons its old form to

guilty for its absence in the movement. This absence in the biggest rebellion of the last 50 years indicates the debacle and the failure of unionism and the bureaucratic state. [...] This behaviour [the cancellation of the demonstration on the 10th of December] goes against the interests of the workers and the people; it is one more step on the path of collaboration with the state and against class struggle. We denounce this politic of betrayal from the GSEE and reiterate the urgent need for a new union confederation in Greece” [translator’s note: this text, available entirely in French on a CNT website is only partially translated on *Libcom* under the title ”Interview with a libertarian syndicalist”]

A beautiful way of affirming the “failure of unionism” while calling for the creation of a new confederation.

Whatever the union, unionism expresses the activity of the class because this activity implies capital *in a conflictual way* and presupposes *its relation to it*. Function of the reciprocal implication between classes (because the proletariat is well and truly a class of this mode of production), unionism finds itself necessarily compelled to foresee the renewing of this relation on the basis of the necessities of capital, it is a function of the activity of the class in its implication with capital, it can only, without committing a betrayal, try to reproduce and consolidate this situation. The union is a functional expression of a real situation of the working class.

But this fraction does not content itself with the *denunciation* of the existing union, while waiting for the formation of a new coordination or preparing for it. It appeals to the autonomy and the self-organisation of the working-class. Lastly, the aim to be reached is defined in the text/leaflet *Nothing will ever be the same* (see above):

The destruction of the temples of consumption, the reappropriation of goods, the “looting”, that is, of all these things that are taken from us, while they bombard us with advertisements, is the deep realisation that all this wealth is ours, because we produce it. [...] This wealth does

2. The moment of coercion

EXPLOITATION IS NOT THE CONTENT OF A CONTRADICTIONARY RELATION BETWEEN TWO SYMMETRICAL TERMS (there would then be no contradiction); it is a difference of relation to the totality which, in view of its content, determines a term to call into question this totality and to overcome it. It is not exploitation in itself that contains its own overcoming, it is the specific situation and activity of the proletariat, as a pole implied by the capitalist mode of production as a totality, which contains and produces the overcoming of this totality.

Exploitation is the valorisation of capital in its three constitutive moments: the face-to-face between labour and capital, the subsumption of labour under capital, the transformation of surplus-value into additional capital. It is this third moment that we must particularly take into account. A crisis of reproduction is defined by the fact that the movement of the self-presupposition of capital, the “double mill” (“double moulinet”) of its reproduction⁶, does not by itself return each component to its proper place.

The transformation of surplus-value into additional capital is never guaranteed: because of competition, obviously, at the most superficial level, and because this transformation implies the encounter between commodity capital and money as capital or means of circulation (this is the general possibility for crisis), but above all because it implies the underlying transformation of surplus-value into profit,

thus the relation of the surplus-value to the total capital employed, and, in the renewing of the cycles of production, the rising organic composition of capital. The falling rate of profit is always the never guaranteed character of the transformation of surplus-value into additional capital, and therefore, of the renewing of the process. We are not talking here of a problem that would only concern individual capitals as such. If, indeed, the *never guaranteed character* of this transformation of surplus-value into additional capital appears at the level of individual capitals, it is because there is competition, but that is not where its origin lies. If there is competition, it is because of the falling rate of profit. *The never guaranteed character* of the transformation-process of surplus-value into additional capital is a characteristic of social capital.

The fact that the transformation of surplus-value into additional capital is problematic is expressed as much by the transformations of capital, the bankruptcies, the layoffs, the transformation of one part of the population into supernumeraries, as it is by the intensification of work, the transformation of the labour-process, the setting of the price of labour power. The transformation of surplus-value into additional capital is first and foremost the extraction of a surplus-value “sufficient” to allow this transformation to take place.

The capital-relation is a *relation of compulsion* (emphasis in the text), the aim of which is to extract surplus labour by prolonging labour time (Marx, *Results of the Immediate Production Process*)

Here lies the general possibility of a crisis of exploitation as contradictory practices between classes, here lies the process of particularisation of the terms of the contradiction in their activities as subjects, here lies their independence and reciprocal implication, here, in exploitation, lies coercion. The self-presupposition of capital is not an automatic movement which, as such, would be self-sufficient to put each one back in its place. The self-presupposition of capital is not the breathing of an automatic monster; it contains, as a function of itself, the action of the subjects of the contradiction. It is here that the relation of exploitation is coercion, as activity of the capitalist class and as activity of the proletariat which

mechanism that supports it for decades and decades, undermine the struggles, bargain our labour power for peanuts, perpetuate the system of exploitation and wage slavery. [...] As workers we have to start taking our responsibilities, and to stop assigning our hopes to wise leaders or “able” representatives. [...] The creation of collective “grassroot” resistances is the only way. To propagate the idea of self-organization [...] abolishing the bureaucrat trade unionists. (http://athens.indymedia.org/front.php3?lang=el&article_id=948395)

According to the text by TPTG and Blaumachen that we already quoted, it was obvious from the beginning that there were two tendencies in this occupation: a “workerist” one (a term that is used in the text), that wanted to use the occupation symbolically in order to criticize the trade unionist bureaucracy and promote the idea of a grass-root unionism independent from political influences; and the other, “proletarian” (*idem*), that wanted to attack one more institution of capitalist society, criticize unionism and to use that place for the construction of one more community of struggle in the context of the general unrest. TPTG’s text write as a conclusion: “The leftist trade unionists that were present in the assembly did not really know what to do with all these insurgent workers [between 400 and 800, depending on sources, at the end of the 18th December demonstration] and left.” (The occupation came to an end on the 21st of December after a “decision” of the occupation committee.). It is in this sense that the occupation of the GSEE shows well the internal split in the movement, that is to say what we defined as a swerve within the activity as a class which poses it within itself as its own limit. One of the terms of this split can also be seen in the will to create coordinations at the Law Faculty, held by leftist groups. Within the occupation of the School of Polytechnics itself, above all during the first three or four days, explosive oppositions, sometimes explosives, existed between anarchists and many young immigrant proletarians on the question of looting.

This limit was formalised, in a largely incantatory manner, by the “anarcho-syndicalist” fraction of the movement which considers the GSEE

class, which was so because it was separated at the level of reproduction, and, on the other hand, the attempt at a junction with the “masses,” which was itself a confirmation of its limits, but which, as a conscious expression of its lack, prevented its autonomisation. This was the swerve that took place in the activity of the class during these riots.

The occupation of the building of the GSEE, on Monday 17th December, was a revealing moment of this situation. The initiative seems to have come from fast-food delivery people, workers employed in the book industry, an anarcho-syndicalist group, the “union” of “freelance workers working with their motorbikes” and non-unionised people (all together approximately 70 people). While the general secretary of the GSEE, after the failure to retake the building by force, declared that the participants “were not workers” because “workers were at work”, two proletarians participating in the occupation answered:

We are working people, we are jobless (paying in layoffs our participations in strikes called by GSEE, when they – the trade unionists – are rewarded with promotions), we are working under contract moving from job to job, we work insecured formally or informally in “internship” programs or in subsidised jobs to lower the unemployment indices. We are part of this world and we are here. Whoever wants to understand can understand. We are insurgent workers, end of story. (http://athens.indymedia.org/front.php3?lang=el&article_id=948395)

We must as well quote the text of the *Declaration of the General Assembly of Insurgent Workers of Athens* (from the liberated building of the GSEE).

We decided to occupy the building of GSEE [...] To disperse the media-touted myth that the workers were and are absent from the clashes, and that the rage of these days was an affair of some 500 “mask-bearers”, “hooligans” or some other fairy tale [...] To flay and uncover the role of the trade union bureaucracy in the undermining of the insurrection -and not only there. GSEE and the entire trade union

is a struggle against this “putting back in one’s place”. For the capitalist class this action embodies itself as State.

The capitalist mode of production, as it emerged from the restructuring, brings about a different organisation of space for the reproduction of capital and a different organisation of violence. The “margins” are no longer thrown back into the periphery but are everywhere integrated, at every levels of the reproduction. If the major result of the production process is the reproduction of the face-to-face between the proletariat and capital, it is not guaranteed that this face-to-face leads *ipso facto* to the first moment of exchange between capital and labour (the purchase and sale of labour power). The disciplining of labour-power, facing a proletarian that has become again, *as proletarian*, a poor, is everywhere on the agenda. The forms of intervention are disciplinary ones.

The relation of exploitation contains, in an immanent way, a direct relation of domination, of subjection, and of social and police control. But when one takes the relation of domination, of subjection, as the totality of the relation of exploitation, the part for the whole, then one loses sight of the relation of exploitation and of the classes. The moment of coercion taken as starting point and posited as the totality of the relation between the individual and society inevitably lapses into the point of view of the isolated individual and the critique of everyday life. That is to say that one loses sight of the structure that makes the isolated individual exist, and therefore contents oneself with having as a starting point what is in fact a result.

In certain conditions and configurations of class struggle, practices may arise which *for themselves*, depart from the other moments of exploitation. It is then fundamentally within the relation of exploitation, in practice, that the proletariat produces capital as coercion, as an exterior constraint within the class relation itself. At the same time, at the other pole of the contradiction, the reproduction of capital becomes corruption, racketeering, and nepotism. In a crisis of reproduction that, as in Greece, brings at the forefront as the foundation of society the institutional and business-orientated bodies in charge of its reproduction, the self-presupposition of capital seems to have become crazy. What is nothing but coercion on one side appears as pure racketeering and corruption on the other. The “contract” is broken:

All this [people's misery] takes place in the midst of a crazy dance of millions landing in priestly businesses [a reference to the land swap scandal of Mount Athos] and doped-up Olympic athletes who are paid extravagantly to "glorify the homeland". Money that ends up in the pockets of the moneyed and powerful. From bribes to "compadres" and haggling of scandalous DVDs with corrupt journalists in order to cover-up government "scandals". While dozens of lives are wasted in forest-fires to allow big capital to turn forests into tourist businesses and while worker deaths in construction sites and in the streets are dubbed "work accidents" (Leaflet, *Nothing will ever be the same*, <http://libcom.org/news/nothing-will-ever-be-same-22122008>).

In Greece, the crisis of reproduction, the running out of future, has designated the sociological categories which are its actors (university and high-school students, second generation immigrants, precarious workers) and constructed the social category that is its synthesis: the youth.

It is the whole ambivalence of these riots: the putting into question of what one is comes not only from what one is (that comes without saying) but also makes from what one is the *particular* category that must express the *general* dissolution of existing conditions. As a police response, the answer of the State is not "inadequate". The response of the state is at the level of this general content, the tight police control, comparable to that of an occupation army is a warning given to the precarious proletariat as a whole and beyond it. The reproduction of the face-to-face between labour power and capital becomes an affair of discipline. These riots were a class movement and not simply a political agitation by activists (which would equally be a class movement), but it was not a struggle within the very foundation of classes: *production*. This is why these riots were able to accomplish the pivotal feat of producing and facing one's class belonging as a constraint, but they could only do that and reach this point by coming up against production's *glass floor*. What is more, the way (the objectives, the unfolding of the riots, the composition of the rioters...) in which this movement has produced this exterior constraint has been intrinsically defined by this limit. That was the ambivalence of this

of the proletariat (in France for example, overtime increased in September and October 2008), which does not prevent short-time from growing. This type of management is the result of the flexibilisation of the labour market that was established during the development of the restructured capitalist mode of production. The number of precarious workers has become so large that the unemployment figures are soaring.

In the contradiction between the proletariat and capital, one can no longer find anything that would be sociologically given *a priori*, as the large factory "mass worker" used to be. The diffuse, segmented, fragmented and sector-based character of the conflicts is unavoidable when the contradiction between classes is situated at the level of capital's reproduction, and this obviously structured the struggles in Greece.

No fraction of the working class is more central than another, what counts is the dynamic and the crisis of the modalities of exploitation of the global labour power. What can be reasonably considered is that this mode of exploitation of global labour power is reaching its limits, as crisis of this cycle of accumulation and as revolutionary overcoming of this cycle of struggle, overcoming that it will have itself produced. But as long as exclusion will appear as exclusion, it will mean paradoxically that the social relation of exploitation is reproduced. Until now, in Greece, there was no significant strike, the functioning of the state was not blocked at all, the occupations were essentially limited to universities, a few local town halls, theatres and briefly radio stations, and the term "insurrection" that was sometimes used, is misleading. If the riots created important damages, nothing has blocked the main movements of Greek companies. For the moment nothing necessitates an army intervention, a possibility that was sometimes raised. However, there is no logical, theoretical, historical or empirical link between the dynamic of a movement and the minority or majority aspect of those who, at a given moment, expressed it. It is simply the minority aspect that must intervene as a determination in the definition of this dynamic.

Because of their content, their development, and their actors, these riots were a struggle of the proletariat in Greece. They constituted a class movement within which the action as a class was split between, on the one hand, the putting into question by the proletariat of its own existence as a

to go into the sphere of production in order to abolish it as a specific moment of human relations and by doing so abolish labour by abolishing wage-labour. It is here the decisive role of productive labour and of those who, at a given moment, are the direct bearers of its contradiction, because they experience it in their existence for capital that is at the same time necessary and superfluous. *Objectively*, they have the capacity to make of this attack a contradiction for capital itself, to turn back the contradiction that is exploitation against itself. The path to the abolition of exploitation goes through exploitation itself; like capital, the revolution is still an objective process.

It is in the revolutionary process that the very definition of the proletariat as the class of productive workers will appear really, in practice, as limited. The definition of the proletariat is no longer a socio-economical definition, as is the definition of the capitalist class, but the polarisation, as activities, of the terms of the contradiction that exploitation is, which is already for each struggle the criterion that makes it possible to judge of its deepening and of the disclosure of its own causes.

In Greece, the question was never posed in terms of productive or unproductive workers, of core or periphery of the proletariat. The rioters (for example working in the fast food industry) could be productive workers in a strict sense and the municipal employees who remained more or less spectators could be unproductive workers in a strict sense. The separation between reproduction and production that was characteristic of this movement for the best and for its limits resulted from the specific situation of these workers, not on the level of their “productiveness” or “unproductiveness” but simply on the form of their labour contract or their situation in the “running out of future” of the capitalist mode of production.

The current crisis innovates in regard to the management of employment by companies. In previous crises, including the 1993 crisis, to adjust labour power to the decrease in production, companies first reduced overtime, ended temporary and short term contracts, and only then would they use short-time work before resorting to mass redundancies. In the current crisis, precarious jobs (short-term or temporary) appear to have a much more important role as a “shock absorber” thereby protecting more the “core”

movement. The riots in Greece were not only the end of radical democratism, but also the end of the alternative milieus which, from their own critiques, in practice, of the capitalist mode of production, have made *for themselves*, in their own practice, the separation between reproduction and production appear, a separation which has become their glass floor.

The configuration of class struggle that settles itself makes these actors constantly hesitate between, on the one hand the perspective of the isolated individual and the reduction of the capitalist relation to coercion, and on the other hand the inclusion of this moment in exploitation and the reproduction of the class. But this inclusion takes the specific form of a call and a reference to the working class in the perspective of grass-root unionism and self-organisation. This call and its specific content took a caricatural form with the militants of the ESE (Anarcho-syndicalist union), an organisation that claims to have its roots in anarcho-syndicalism (opposed to the majority of the anarchist movement which claims “insurrectionalist” bases). That is the dilemma within which the movement is situated; it is one of its limits and simultaneously there that it constitutes a swerve (as will be seen in the following chapter) in the action of the proletariat as a class. In fact, the ESE is a very small group and the only one officially claiming adherence to anarcho-syndicalism. Their echo is very limited or even insignificant in the “milieu” in Greece. On the other hand, it is difficult to hold that a large majority of the “anarchist milieu” is composed of “insurrectionalists”, even if it is clear that a large majority in the milieu considers the use of violence as a necessity. After 2003 and the decline of the anti-globalisation movement, a kind of “restructuring” of the anarchist milieu in Greece took place; many young people joined it, which produced a widening and a modification of its relation to “society”. The attempts to set up “class unions”, coming from a not fully theorised anarcho-syndicalism, are the result of this modification. The members of these unions (primarily the union of all those who work freelance and use motorcycles) played an essential role in the initiative to occupy the GSEE. This new aspect of the relations within the anarchist milieu was one of the factors that explained, on the one hand, the strong interaction between the generalisation of the riots and the anarchist milieu, and on the other hand, the split which appeared during the occupation of the GSEE, and in other less clear-cut cases. In that sense, it is possible

to say that the “milieu” itself was reproducing within itself the general ambivalence of these riots, and, and at its level, the *swerve* taking place there.

In Greece, it is within this configuration and the ambiguity it contained that, for the proletarians in struggle, their class belonging, their own definition as a class in their relation to capital, was produced and appeared as an exterior constraint. *By their own practice, they put themselves in question as proletarians in their struggle, but they only did it by separating, in their attacks and in their objectives, the moments and the institutions of social reproduction.* As for the rest, they referred to a working class that remained what it is and was only asked to self-organise (even when students/precarious workers took over two call centres, work was only interrupted for a short while). Reproduction and production of capital remained foreign to each other. The result of this hesitation was the minority character of the movement and, finally, when it receded, its concentration in the district of Exarchia in Athens and Ano Poli in Thessaloniki.

The struggle remained focused on reproduction and the third moment of exploitation. The Greek rioters could not strike, they did not put forward, for themselves, a workers identity, they only invoked it for others. To attack capital as a reproduction that is separated and as a constraint to the reproduction of social relations is not only failing to interrupt capitalist production, but also not being able to consider, even very hypothetically, the expropriation of capital, the taking over of the elements of productive capital and of material elements of social reproduction, as well as its fluxes, with its own aim, and with all the limits and ambiguities it implies (self-management...).

In general, the “neighbourhood popular assemblies” never lasted long and left the “locals” indifferent or curious at best⁷. We must, however, point out the case of the occupation of the town hall of a district in the South of Athens where municipal clerical workers carried on some of their activities, in connection with the assembly of the neighbourhood:

In Agios Demetrios the popular assembly of the occupation tried to cooperate with the municipal clerical workers in order to restart some municipal services without the mediation of the municipal authorities. The plan was to

is thanks to this that class belonging can disintegrate and that within its struggle the proletariat can start its self-transformation (this depends on all sorts of circumstances and does not happen each time productive workers are on strike.)

If the proletariat is not limited to the class of the workers producing surplus-value, it is still *the contradiction that is productive labour which constructs it*. Productive labour (productive of surplus-labour, that is to say of capital) is the living and objective contradiction of this mode of production. It is not a nature attached to people: the same worker can accomplish tasks which are productive and others which are not; the productive character of labour can be defined at the level of the collective worker; the same (temp) worker can change, from one week to another, from a productive job to one that is not. But the relation between the proletariat as a whole and capital is constructed by the contradictory situation of productive labour in the capitalist mode of production. What is important is to know, always historically and conjecturally, how this essential (constitutive) contradiction constructs, at a given point in time, class struggle, knowing that it is in the very nature of the capitalist mode of production that this contradiction does not appear clearly, surplus-value becoming by definition profit and capital being value in process.

The revolution may start in the factory, but it will not remain there. It will begin its own task when workers leave them to abolish them, it will confront self-organisation, autonomy and everything that is linked to “councilism”. This revolution will be the revolution of an epoch in which the contradiction between classes is situated at the level of their reciprocal implication and their reproduction. And “the weakest link” of this contradiction, the exploitation which ties the classes together, is situated in the moments of the social reproduction of labour power, precisely where, far from affirming itself, the definition of the proletariat as the class of productive labour appears always (and more and more in the current forms of reproduction) as contingent and uncertain, not only for each proletarian in particular but also structurally for the whole class. But if the class struggle remains a movement at the level of reproduction, it will not have integrated in itself its own *raison d'être*: production. *It is currently the recurrent limit of all the riots and “insurrections”, what defines them as “minority” events.* The revolution will have

before its appropriation) is not a homogeneous mass without distinctions, mediations or hierarchies; it is not a significant totality in which each part contains the determinations of the totality. We should not forget a central problem: if each proletarian has a formally identical relation to her particular capital, she does not have the same relation to social capital depending on her being a productive worker or not (it is here not a problem of consciousness, but an objective situation). If the contradiction represented by productive labour was not at the core of class struggle, for the capitalist mode of production and for the proletariat, we could not speak of revolution (it would be something exogenous to the mode of production, at best a utopia, at worse nothing.) It is the very mode through which labour exists socially, valorisation, which is the contradiction between the proletariat and capital. Defined by exploitation, the proletariat is in contradiction with the socially necessary existence of its labour as capital, that is to say an autonomised value which remains so only through valorising itself: *the falling rate of profit is a contradiction between the classes*. The proletariat is constantly in contradiction with its own definition as a class: the necessity of its reproduction is something it finds facing it in the form of capital, and for capital the proletariat is always necessary and at the same time to be done away with. The proletariat never finds its confirmation in the reproduction of the social relation in which it is yet a necessary pole. This is the contradiction of productive labour.¹¹

Productive workers are not for all that revolutionaries by nature and at all times. Classes are not collections of individuals, the proletariat and the capitalist class are the social polarisation of the contradiction which is the falling rate of profit or productive labour structuring society as a whole. The specific relation (compared to any other exploited labour) between productive labour and social capital does not get fixed as the essence of productive workers. However, in the contradiction of productive labour which structures *society as a whole* and polarises it into contradictory classes, productive workers have a specific place. Through blocking the production of value and surplus-value, the men who live at the core of the conflict of capital as contradiction in process do not simply “block”. In their singular action, which is nothing special but only their engagement in the struggle, the contradiction that structures society as a whole as class struggle comes back on itself, on its own condition. It

satisfy only urgent social needs, such as issuing green cards for the immigrants as well as paying wages and extra allowances. The mayor and the municipal council intimidated the workers, trying to prevent them from providing these services. (TPTG and Blaumachen, *op. cit.*)

Generally, it is enough to examine the figures concerning the number of people participating in the different related demonstrations, which rarely exceeded 200 or 300 in a city (Athens- Piraeus) of over four million (cf: *Short presentation of the recent events in Athens through the eyes of some proletarian participants*).

To say in an emphatic tone that what happened is a “revolt of a whole part of the population”, as was written in a leaflet circulating in Paris, is pure fancy. However, what numbers cannot show is the spread of the movement. If one can say that the rioters or even the demonstrators were a minority, one must add that they were a minority *...everywhere*. On some days in Athens one could see four neighbourhood demonstrations occurring simultaneously as well as a central demo, while the occupations were going on. In any case, the question of whether or not it was a “mass movement” is not simply a matter of numbers; the criterion is the link between production and reproduction, which can then no longer be seen as the *institutions* of reproduction and of everyday life⁸. The limit of the expansion of these riots was not a purely quantitative problem or even just a lack (“the working class dealing directly with production should have joined the movement”), the limit should not be considered as an exterior, as something surrounding, but as something that in fact defines the very thing of which it is the limit, in an internal way.

In *Like a winter with a thousand Decembers*, TPTG and Blaumachen write:

The cops were rather the most visible and the 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.

The problem is that all this was only attacked by attacking the police, attacking the tip of the iceberg.

The struggle against coercion is the struggle against “normality”, that is to say “their normality, the normality of capitalist exploitation, misery, repression and death” as a leaflet in the movement states is. The movement, in its limit and its dynamic, expresses, for better or worse, the point of view of the everyday life. From the point of view of its transformation, the banality and uninteresting character of everyday life are turned around as a proof of its centrality. Banality and boredom are posited as the general principle of this society: the giant plastic Christmas tree on Syntagma square can then become a highly strategic target protected by riot cops. The shops of Ermou street, open on Sundays to increase and facilitate Christmas shopping, were just as much targets as the underground and its dull transport of labour power: “I consume therefore I am”, “Work, consume, die” stated the banners used during a small demonstration (150 people) and an intervention in a department store that lasted an hour. But from the point of view of the critique of everyday life, the proletariat is nothing but the commodity-labour power from which its revolt against its situation as commodity arises; this revolt does not come from the contradiction inscribed in this situation *in the capitalist mode of production itself and for itself*, that is to say from its very situation as commodity labour power, and from the contradictions it contains (surplus-labour/necessary labour; use-value/exchange value), but from what this situation negates: life, the lived, etc. Since the critique of everyday life does not go beyond the critique of commodities and exchange, it cannot understand the relation between the proletariat and capital as a contradiction between two terms which form a totality and which can only exist through the

but of the production in the sense that transports are an extension of the immediate production process. The strategy of “blocking the traffic” neither necessitates nor justifies any theoretical *aggiornamento*.

To return to Greece (among others, as the strategy of the blockade is characteristic of a growing number of struggles), the blockade is recognized by its very actors as the form of struggle of those who have no immediate hold over production. The blockade is however not a stopgap solution insofar as it can be extremely effective. But in the case of Greece, it is, as a form of struggle, in line with the separation between the attack against the reproduction of the social relations on one side and production on the other side, a separation which defined the riots. Here the reproduction is the movement of the “entrants” (*input*) in the production process, the condition for its continuity.

As for the occupations of public buildings, which were a new form of struggle coming from the riots, they find their place in the general movement of attacks against all the institutional forms of the reproduction.

When we speak about the separation between reproduction and production, production and circulation, does it mean that the Greek rioters were not productive workers, or worse, that they were not proletarians (or marginal and peripheral proletarians)? If one wants to think in those terms, many of the rioters were productive workers in the strictest sense: exchanging their labour power with a capital engaged in the production sector. What is more, a strict definition of productive labour does not mean that only productive workers are proletarians. An unproductive worker sells her labour power and is exploited by the capitalist in the same way, and the degree of her exploitation will determine the part of surplus-value she will be able to appropriate as profit. It is from the strict definition of productive labour that one can deduce that the proletariat is not limited to productive workers. Indeed, first, it is in the very essence of surplus-value to exist as profit, including for productive capitals, second, for this very reason, it is the capitalist class as a whole that exploits the working class as a whole, in the same way as a proletarian belongs to the capitalist class before selling herself to this or that boss. However, the global social labour that capital creates by appropriating it (social labour does not pre-exist in a proletarian or in the class as a whole

the point of departure here [...] The moments are:
(I) The real production process and its duration.
(II) Transformation of the product into money.
Duration of this operation. (III) Transformation
of the money in the proper proportions into raw
material, means of labour and labour, in short,
into the elements of productive capital. (IV)
The exchange of a part of the capital for living
labour capacity can be regarded as a particular
moment, and must be so regarded, since the
labour market is ruled by other laws than the
product market etc. (*Grundrisse*, Notebook V,
chapter: The four moments in the turnover of
capital)

The immediate process does not put an end to the life cycle of capital, it must be completed by the circulation process which becomes the mediation of the process of social production. The social production process differs from the immediate production process to the extent that the latter is opposed to immediate circulation.

If we return to the strategy of the blockade, one realises that while fundamentally true in theory, it nevertheless leads to a great deal of confusion. First of all, the confusion between circulation and transports: circulation doesn't have the same meaning for capital as for the gendermerie. The confusion between circulation as a specific moment of the process of reproduction, which thus alternates with the phase of production, and circulation as the general form of the process of reproduction. In any case it is true that commodities and labour power must materially move from one point to another (exchange, in a strictly economic sense, in the capitalist mode of production, has little to do with this question) and that it is indispensable to the reproduction of capital. In fact, in the theory of capital as circulation, the strategy of the blockade rests on a theoretical foundation that does not correspond to its effective practice. This is not a serious problem so long as one is concerned with actions, but it becomes one when theories regarding the definition of productive labour and value are grafted onto these confusions. Blocking the traffic hinders the production of value because it necessarily has repercussions on it, not because it is in itself blocking the production of value. It would even be more accurate to say that it is not a blockade of the circulation,

other, but rather understand it as two terms which are not for each other the *raison d'être* and the negation; in fact it is not a contradiction.

The principle, general contribution of the riots in Greece is to have produced within exploitation, through its own practice, the moment coercion as included in the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production rather than solely as police repression. Coercion is not limited to repression; it includes all the social processes and all the institutions through which the proletariat is constantly put in a position in which it can valorise capital. This moment is included in exploitation as the self-presupposition of capital; it is included in the process that makes capitalist production a reproduction. The moment of self-presupposition that is coercion, beyond mere police intervention, was not the cause but rather the content of the riots. These riots demonstrated the inclusion of coercion within the process of the reproduction of capitalist social relations, but they showed this inclusion as being, in an internal way, their own lack, insofar as the attack upon this moment and upon all the institutions which are placed in charge of it remained separated from production. It is the social situation of the rioters itself which appeared in this contradiction of inclusion and lack. Students without prospects, young immigrants, precarious workers – these are the proletarians who experience the reproduction of capitalist social relations everyday as coercion, coercion which is included in this reproduction because they are proletarians, but they experience it in their everyday lives as separated and contingent (accidental and non-necessary) in relation to production itself. At the same time as they struggle in this moment of coercion as separated, they conceive and live this separation as a lack in their struggle against this mode of production. This is the way this movement produced class belonging as an external constraint, but in this way only. It is in this regard that it is situated at the level of this cycle of struggle, and constitutes one of its historically decisive moments. It is the attack upon the institutions and forms of social reproduction taken for themselves that constituted its force but simultaneously expressed its limits. The most obvious empirical manifestation of these limits being its impossibility, from what constituted its force, to spread. Despite all the popular sympathy it garnered, it never was a mass movement. It was the sympathy of interested spectators, but of spectators all the same. Consequently, the movement remained at the periphery of what were its very

targets: the institutions of reproduction, which were never disturbed in a decisive way, paradoxically because they were its specific targets and its specific reason for existence. Neither the production, nor the circulation of capital were at any moment really disturbed, even when shopping in Ermou Street (or in the department stores of the periphery) was blocked on the Sunday before Christmas, it was finally a failure because customers were rushing to do their shopping. In the same way, to interrupt the broadcast of a TV programme for one minute to tell the viewers to go down to the street is pure phantasm if they are not there already.

Essentially, this movement was that of the autonomisation of reproduction, generally as everyday life, specifically as a critique of the institutional apparatuses for reproduction. These two aspects became synthesized in the critique of democracy. The riots in Greece seem to be the first movement in the recent period where democracy was centrally and genuinely criticized, in its governmental form as well as in the mode of functioning of the struggle itself. It was a movement without political illusion, except the very critique of democracy. Looking at the movement from France, the authors of the leaflet that circulated in Paris and to which we already referred can rightly write:

The Greek rioters show us a path that had been searched for during the contestation of the CPE and during these last weeks (occupations of secondary-schools and other buildings, blockades of communication channels and a few cars burned), they do better and refuse the rigged dialogue with the State and its henchmen.

This challenge to governmental democracy as well as to the democratic functioning of the struggle itself did not arise from a better method of struggle that would have finally been found but from its absence of demands and representatives. As a crisis of reproduction, it is the very existence of a relationship with the state, or with any institution for that matter, which is challenged: the movement produces neither demands nor representatives: “disappearance of all those who speak in our name: parties, unions, experts, journalists, associations”, the same leaflet says.

The group Blaumachen from Thessaloniki published in

3. a free exchange relation as mediation between the two;
4. “Lastly, the side that represents the objective conditions of labour as independent values existing for themselves must have the value-form and must aim at the self-valorisation of money, rather than immediate enjoyment or the creation of use-values.”

Point 4 is not simply a gloss over point 2, it arises from the double relation of mediation (circulation) between the extremes it mediates: presupposition and result. One must then distinguish between two acceptations of exchange (of circulation): on the one hand, exchange as a specific moment of the process of reproduction, which therefore alternates with the production phase, on the other hand, exchange as form of the process of reproduction, as for example in expressions like “production based on exchange”. As moments facing each other circulation and production are immediate, must be mediated. For simple circulation, this mediation is the process of production which generates commodities which must again be thrown back in it from outside. For capital, as soon as one considers it in its general movement, production includes circulation and vice-versa.

[C]irculation is itself a moment of production, since capital becomes capital only through circulation; production is a moment of circulation only in so far as the latter is itself regarded as the totality of the production process. (Marx, *Grundrisse*, Notebook V, Penguin, 1973)

Therefore, contrary to the case of simple circulation, the elements that circulation mediates are not longer exterior to it, but rather are its presuppositions and its result.

The fact that production is included as a moment of circulation and vice-versa should not make us forget that the totality is composed of distinct moments, precisely detailed by Marx at the very same time when he affirms this reciprocal inclusion.

If we examine the entire turnover of capital, then four moments appear, or, each of the two great moments of the production process and the circulation process appears again in a duality: we can take either circulation or production as

When the contradictory relation between the proletariat and capital is situated at the level of reproduction, the contradiction between the proletariat and capital contains the calling into question by the proletariat of the movement in which it is itself reproduced as a class. This is now the content of class struggle and what is at stake in it. To act as a class is now, on the one hand, to have as a horizon only capital and the categories of its reproduction, and, on the other hand it is, for the same reason, to be in contradiction with one's own class reproduction, to call it into question. In the current cycle of struggle the contradiction between the proletariat and capital becomes so tense that class definition becomes an exterior constraint, an exteriority which exists only because capital exists. Class belonging is exteriorised as a constraint. This is the moment of the qualitative leap in class struggle, it is now possible to have, not a change within the system but a change of system.

The dynamic of this cycle of struggle appears like a swerve within class struggle, that is to say like a swerve within the very fact of acting as a class.

In the very forms of its actions, the movement expressed this constitutive *swerve*. We already insisted on the attack of all the institutional forms of the general reproduction of capitalist social relations (essentially the State), without this attack of *reproduction* to include *production*. The attack of reproduction found itself as if floating above the glass floor that separates it from production. The blockades and the occupations should also be considered as forms deriving from this situation. Let us leave aside, in order to consider them in themselves, the fact that the blockades do not seem to have been particularly efficient.

The strategy of the blockade comes from a true idea: capital is value in process, that is to say that value remains itself when it passes from the money form to the commodity form, from production to exchange, that circulation and production are each a moment of each other and include themselves reciprocally.

Stating the fundamental conditions of the capital relation (in *Grundrisse*), Marx lists:

1. on one side, living labour power;
2. on the other side value or materialized labour;

June 2006 a text, *Occupation, not democracy!*, which drew a critical lesson from the anti-CPE struggle that took place in France and the student struggles that happened at the same time in Greece. A few months later, in a short presentation, the content of the text was defined as follows: “[It] was determined by what we saw then as the major weaknesses of the movement, i.e. the adherence to democratic procedures and generally to a democratist ideology along with the absence of any critique of schoolwork and of the media’s mediating role.” This same presentation mentions a contemporary text (*Let the occupations become time-barricades*) introducing the ‘social wage [minimum income]’ demand. If the text correctly defines the obstacles constituted by the democratic course of the struggle, what has not been understood is the relation between the content of the struggle, the existence of demands itself (demands imply democracy as self-recognition of the group and relation to the opponent), its actors, and its democratic form. The democratic course of the struggle is simply criticized as a bad method for struggle. Because of this, chased out the door, the democratic ideology comes back through the window.

When deliberative proceedings are constituted (an assembly, a coordination or a parliament), the principal question is not the procedures by which the will of all the participants can best express itself, but the relation between the process of debate and the action, a question which cannot be dissociated from the nature of the action itself. We don’t care about procedures in which everybody’s opinion can be expressed. We don’t want to debate with everybody. (Blaumachen, op. cit.)

Despite the remark that “this question cannot be dissociated from action”, the question remains one of decision taking, that is to say, the starting point is always the individual and the group that will act is a sum of individuals who decided to act together. Whatever the procedure used to take the decision, the question concerns always the individual and the decision. In the course of a struggle, democracy is not a form of decision taking and relation to action that could be simply replaced by another. The formal critique of democracy does not say why it exists, why, as content, it imposes itself as the form of this struggle. This critique says rightly why

this form is an obstacle but it does not say why this obstacle exists and is *chosen* by the actors of the struggle. From this, if the critique itself remains democratic, it is because it suggests another choice, another way to do. But, in fact, in all struggles where a critique of democratic procedures arise, what is at stake is the passage to another content of the struggle, and *then it is not the former procedure that is the object of critique but the former content of the struggle*. The critique of democratic procedures does not see this passage when it tries to understand the struggle and understand itself.

During the recent riots in Greece, it seems that the movement began spontaneously and constructed itself in action directly beyond democratic procedures, recognised as obstacles, in the struggle itself and as a form of governing (democracy being immediately considered as the current form of the State and of its police that everybody hates, no more, no less). Obviously the question of “direct democracy” and of a better discussion process during the assemblies was raised (“more people must speak”, “everybody has the right to speak”, “we do not want “experts” to speak for ourselves”, “we are all equal”). But a movement that formulates no demands to the state gives to its struggle a content that necessitates no form of representation; the movement must exist for itself in its confrontations and contradictions. The procedures of decision taking involve conflicts, but they are not democratic in the sense that these decisions would imply a majority, a minority, formation of organs of representation, a general constraint of application.

It is necessary to quote at length the *Second announcement of the occupation of the University of Economics* of Athens to show the enormous and quite radical progress, both in theory and practice, that these riots made in their simple and direct critique of democracy.

On the other side, a dilapidated democracy, in economic crisis, without any social legitimacy because of the small and big “scandals”, because of the creation of “armies” of poor and excluded people, trying to draw the social consent, in order to crack down the riots... Theatrical performances of sensitivity in front of the cameras from the Prime Minister, the ministers, the deputies, journalists and other parasites,

notably wage-earners), in the inscription of their own locations as well as in the total visibility of these places and the way to occupy them that the general political events of the uprising had or could have brought.

Beyond the relative obscurity of the end of the sentence, to describe, when speaking of class struggle, “workers and notably wage-earners” as “social actors”, is, to say the least, a euphemism, and to describe their absence as simply something that was “lacking” reveals a theory of class struggle that is quite difficult to grasp. Beyond these critiques, be it for TPTG, Blaumachen as well as Courant Alternatif, this absence is so blatant it cannot be ignored. But to refer to it as simply a lack in relation to what happened reveals an error of method and of analysis. The limit is part of the definition of what it is the limit of, the limit is not exterior to the definition.

It is impossible to understand the importance of what happened in Greece without taking these facts into account. In such a situation, the wish of a Greek anarcho-syndicalist that “from all this a new movement with workers structures, union structures, social structures will arise that will be more popular, more organized and more focused on struggles”, balances between incantation and obsolescence.

The movement was an attack, a calling into question, a refusal by proletarians of their situation as proletarians, but its actors were a fraction of the proletariat (students, precarious workers, often both, and migrant workers) which, even if it expressed the general situation of the workers, remained a particular fraction, and this during the whole movement. What was decisive is that this calling into question in the class struggle did not autonomise itself, it wanted to be and it was from the beginning a workers manifestation, it remained the act of a class and its relations within the working class. These riots formalized clearly and *in practice* what is at stake in the current class struggle: to act as a class in the struggle against capital implies for the proletariat its own calling into question and posits the fact of acting as a class as the limit it must overcome. Things appeared and were done as such. One can count on the unfolding of the crisis for the generality not to remain particular.

union of workers employed in bookshops and printing offices called for a 4 hours strike (from 13h to 17h). On Friday 19th December, “During the day permanent and temp workers, students and unemployed from the occupations of ASOEE and GSEE organized interventions in two call centres: MRB (which is a company organizing public opinion polls) and OTE (which is the national telecommunications company of Greece). The first intervention took place around noon and only a few people participated because of the long distance between the site and the city centre. Around 60 people participated in the second intervention and blocked the work process for a few minutes. The temp workers in the call centre responded to the action in a positive way.” (TPTG and Blaumachen, *Greece unrest: the story so far*). “in a positive way...”, but they continued working.

In Thessaloniki, on Monday 9th December, day of Alexander’s funeral, all public sector workers stopped working for the afternoon. In Thessaloniki again, during a demonstration that went through working class districts: “Many local habitants applauded, while others joined the demo, a fact that manifests a wider sympathy with the insurrection even from proletarians that didn’t participate in riots or other actions” (TPTG and Blaumachen, op. cit.). To summarize, plenty of sympathy, few actions.

The riot, in general, was not felt in any significant way in the workplaces, in the sense that no strikes were called to support it. The only exceptions were the teachers’ strike on the day of the funeral of young Alexis and the big participation in the strike demo against the state budget on the 10th of December. Apart from these, the rebellion left workplaces untouched.” (TPTG and Blaumachen, *Like a winter with a thousand Decembers*)

In the January issue of *Courant Alternatif*, one can read:

A movement of a global character, but maybe not really generalised. And it was probably its main limit. Probably what was lacking for it to spread like wildfire was a few more communal popular assemblies. Probably, what was missing as well was the mobilization of social actors (workers,

with simultaneous invocations for the necessity of social pacification and for the necessity of the state and the society to “walk together” under the promise of “the entrenchment of the democratic institutions”. However, the eminent constitutive myth of democracy, the myth of the “social contract”, becomes ashes in the streets of diffused social mutiny of these days. That’s why the system attempts with all its forces to redeploy. That’s why governmental and under-governmental deliberations and statements are constantly taking place. That’s why the media in a commissioned service undertook their famous and well-known role, the one of organized falsehood and the challenging of fear syndromes [...] That’s why the schools will remain closed today, trying to deter the concentrations of students. That’s why the National Workers’ Union of Greece changed the tomorrow’s strike-demonstration into a simple concentration outside of the parliament. That’s why the left winger pillars of the system, while “they comprehend” the right of the social rage, condemn the “extremities” and ask the question of the fall of the government, that’s why they change the mutiny into a simple protest against the governmental policy... (http://katalipsiasoe.blogspot.com/2008/12/2_09.html).

Quite simply, on the other side, it is democracy that stands up or rather collapses in the “breach of contract”, as is said in the text.

But such a critique does not mean that democracy did not come back in the movement in the form of its critique. This return of democracy under the form of its critique is the struggle against coercion, the normality of everyday life and the fact that these riots were directed against reproduction as a separate form.

The riots in Greece were, in action, a certain conception of the reproduction of social relations and of ideology. As it could not attack practically the reproduction of capitalist social relations at its root, that is as producing value and

surplus-value, the movement mixed up production and circulation of value (even if the blockades of circulation seem to have remained symbolical), it reduced, in its practice, the reproduction of social relations to an attack against the normality of an everyday life that is commodified. If one can speak of the democratism of the critique of democracy, it is because what is criticized, that is capitalist social relations, is then reduced to the individual's internalization of what was inculcated to him by schools, Medias, collaborationist intellectuals, social experience. Ideology is rightly seen as a practical force used by all sorts of institutions and behaviours, but the reproduction of social relations it allows is reduced to a mechanism of internalization/inculcation that would give it its practical force. The mechanism of inculcation of dominant norms, which determine and constrain the individuals' actions, would give to it the material force that perpetuates the social relations: "Shut up and shop"; "Work, vote and shut up" "Consciousness springs from barricades. Wake up." (Some banners during a demo in front of the shopping centre *The Mall* in Athens).

At this price, and this is the price that the riots in Greece had to pay for their limits to be their dynamic, the absence of impact and actions in the sphere of production (and this was obvious all along the movement) became, at the cost of this ideological reduction of the reproduction of capitalist social relations, a global attack against their reproduction. The problem is that the reproduction of social relations, including the relations of production, is posited as subjected to the submission of individuals to norms of behaviour whose paradigms are work and consumption, and, in the same way, the production of value appears as subjected to its circulation. In fact, society as a whole is rightly recognised as reproducing itself as production, but this production depends on the individuals' acceptance of the reproduction of social relations inculcated to them, the individuals gaining a cementing role in the social structure. The reproduction of social relations consists in the fact that, for individuals, ideas are material acts, included in practices, normalised by rituals, defined by the ideological apparatuses and the institutions from which the ideas of these subjects derive. Attacking the capitalist society globally becomes attacking the behaviours and the fears that trap the individual into an ideological straitjacket and unconsciously dictates its conduct and its objectives, in a direction that is obviously favourable to the reproduction of the existing system. Each

the junction was not a pure militant act and the general sympathy the movement found within the mass of workers was not simply some sort of compassion. On Monday 8th December (two days after the murder of Alexander), during a demonstration estimated to have gathered 20 000 people, many of them, maybe more than 1 500, were walking "in and out" of the demonstration, attacking banks and destroying the luxury shops of the town centre. Plenty of looting took place in the shops at the entrance of the Pirea Avenue, people were walking slowly and no one really tried to stop the attacks or the looting. (cf. *An updated short presentation of the recent riots in Athens and Thessaloniki through the eyes of some proletarian participants*, TPTG and Blaumachen) In the same way, on Thursday 18th December, during another one of these large demonstrations, the head of the demonstration slowed down to prevent the cops from encircling the anarchist cortege. The connection existed objectively. It is obvious for any worker that state repression is intrinsically linked to economic exploitation, to poverty, to lays-offs. In a Europe that demands 70 hours of work per week for workers, repression becomes the last "argument" of the capitalist class and of the States.

Despite this, during this whole period, no wave of strikes could be seen, not even local strikes of any real amplitude, while spontaneous and violent demonstrations multiplied, especially during the first days that followed the murder of Alexander. Even the teachers only did a 24 hours strike on 9th December, the day preceding the general strike planned by the GSEE¹⁰ long before the events. During the general strike of 10th December "against the 2009 state budget", the unions replaced the planned demonstration by a simple gathering on Syntagma square which gathered only 7000 people. A few clashes with the police took place, but for the rest of the demonstrators, despite the frustration expressed, it worked.

Above all, the following day, no picket lines could be seen. If, on Wednesday 17th December, the striking workers of the Acropolis (still in construction) building site supported some students as they hung two giant banners on the site, they stopped their strike the same day as they received the promise that their demands would be met. On the following day, 18th December, the rank and file union of the postmen (who aspire to represent all freelance workers using motorbikes for their job) called for a one-day strike, while the

as a class that it stumbled against, as its internal limit. On the one hand, the calling into question by the proletariat of its own existence as a class remained the fact of a minority, since it was restricted to a segment of the work force (students, precarious workers, immigrants), even if this minority happened to be present everywhere. The generality of this fragment's situation remained its particularity and the calling into question of reproduction remained separated from production in the coercion moment of the self-presupposition of capital. On the other hand, the existence of the movement as class activity was split between this putting into question and a "call" that asked the working class, in the manifestation of its autonomy and of its self-organization, to join it. This was in clear contradiction with the putting into question of the proletariat of its own existence as a class which was then at stake.

This final aspect of the riots played an essential part in the dynamics and the limits of the movement. On the one hand, the riots, which were the act of a class, produced class belonging as an exterior constraint, because of its very actors. On the other hand, it could only remain the act of a class (to escape the autonomisation of its refusal of the proletarian condition as a life style) in its minority separation (we saw that it was not only a question of numbers) by referring to a working class that, as for autonomy and self-organization, is largely mythical. It could take the strange and caricatural form of this text which, thanks to its attractive title, circulated widely on the web: *An open letter to students by workers in Athens*⁹ One could read in it this sentence, full of grandiloquence if empty of meaning: "Don't stay alone; call us [...] Don't be afraid to call us to change our lives all together."

This junction, according to a Greek anarcho-syndicalist, was principally looked for by the people occupying the School of Economics, who could be characterized as class struggle anarchists (compared to those occupying the Polytechnic School: "purist" anarchists, according to the same that can be found on the Caen CNT-AIT website). The "Workers Committees" organized at the School of Economics (ASOEE) and mentioned in the same text, have never existed, let alone "committees" of a specific sector. What happened was limited to interventions at work places that hardly had any result. Even if the working class, on the whole, did not move during those days, the work of linking and making

one of these behaviours, each one of these institutions is then produced as so many *grounds for political struggles*.

The economic reproduction, centred on the production/reproduction of capital, must be completed with the reproduction of the relations of production as relations of domination, keeping in mind that this reproduction must come from the integration/internalization of the values and the norms of the current society, or, when all this collapses, from violent and crude repression. The strategic aim, therefore, consists in ridding oneself of this inculcation and these habits which constitute the cement of society, that by which people can live together under the domination of the capitalists and the masters of the world.

The discarding of this inculcation was the struggle itself as well as its content; it was never in Greece a militant activity trying to bring the consciousness of its alienation to the people. The rioters acted from their own situation and against it. If one can define it as a struggle against social relations seen as inculcation and ideology, from which the general reproduction of society would depend, then it did not take the form of a relation between an enlightened avant-garde bringing consciousness and demystification and a population in need of awakening. This movement was fundamentally anti-capitalist and proudly affirmative of itself, and thanks to that it met a large part of the population without propaganda. It was a movement adequate to a crisis of the relation between capital and the proletariat, where the initiative until then was in the hands of the pole of the contradiction that subsumes the other as economy and necessity. In was the struggle—shaping of the crisis of capital, a de-objectification.

But a de-objectification that overlooked the objectivity of the economy. As we said in the introduction, "It is by becoming problematic, that is to say *by being in crisis as reproduction*, that the self-presupposition of capital designates, at first, as the place for the crisis, sectors of society where its reproduction takes a *specified form* in relation to society itself" and we would now add: designates as the actors of this crisis this fraction of the proletariat that is defined by the vagaries of the reproduction themselves. This crisis of the reproduction affects first and foremost the "entrants" and constructs the social category of "youth", it was concentrated in the places specialised in the reproduction, designating the

precarious youth as its main actor (the 600 Euro generation). This fraction did not need any propaganda to touch the rest of the class, but reproduction appeared for it as a specific activity and status.

As a result, each behaviour or institution becomes the place and the issue of a specific struggle against the domination of capital (even if they are destined to become united); the struggles are directed against the system of domination that is responsible for maintaining the subject in its subjection (in general, prisons become the paradigmatic target of this ideological view of the capitalist mode of production). But neither the schools, the family, consumption politics, nor prisons produce classes, these are not where the social division takes its roots, as is presupposed by the concept of domination taken for itself, and its attack, however real. The struggle against domination takes as its object the same false question that is the foundation of the democratic ideology: how do individuals form a society, what is the cement that makes them hold together, for some in a dominant position, for the others in a dominated one? Society becomes an environment of the individual. The starting point is the “individual” form, distinct (opposed or integrated) from “Society”, seen as an ensemble of relations which are beyond the individual and seem foreign to him, as an environment, an objective structure, an exterior constraint to which it must adapt. The ideology of democracy is based on the question “how do individuals construct a society”; the opposite proposition “how do individual deconstruct a society?” remains then a democratic critique of democracy. *The theory of the contract, as the result of the diffusion of commodity exchange, gives way to the critique of everyday life and normality as critique of the internalisation of capital fetishism.*

Under whatever aspect we consider them, in their very strength, these riots themselves have always designated a blind spot: the working class, the sphere of production.

3. Dynamics and limits of the riots in Greece.

THE REVOLUTION CURRENTLY DEPENDS ON THE OVERCOMING OF A CONTRADICTION CONSTITUTIVE OF CLASS STRUGGLE: to be a class is for the proletariat the obstacle that its struggle as a class must overcome/ abolish. The riots in Greece have posed this obstacle, formalized the contradiction, but they did not go further. Here was their limit, but the contradiction is now posed practically, for this cycle of struggle, in the restructured capitalism and its crisis.

Because of the targets of the riots, their modes of action, their type of organization, the attack on capitalist society as the reproduction of social relations, the practical production of the moment coercion in the self-presupposition of capital, these riots had as their main content the struggle of the proletariat against its own existence as a class. This essential determination of the current struggles did not autonomise itself as it did in the “direct action movement” at the beginning of the 2000s, the fact of being a proletarian did not become something to be overcome as a prerequisite for the contradiction and for the struggle against capital. The movement of the riots in Greece was not content with itself; contrary to the direct action movement, it did not construct itself as self-referential. The movement always wanted to be and was really a movement of the proletarian class. But it is precisely this will and this real existence of its action