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Greek December 2008 Revolt Revisited

Answers from Void Network to questions from US
comrades

Void Network

2009

How much were the limits of the insurrection imposed from outside, by the power of the State?

The government trapped in scandals, economical crisis, and inner conflicts is unable to learn from all the ways it was beaten. An Elite that tries to behave like nothing happened can do nothing but forget and place the insurrection in an oblivion.

During the insurrection in the countryside, the towns and small cities, the external influences were much stronger than in Athens and Thessaloniki. For example, in Patras and in Larisa, both big cities that experienced riots that the police were unable to control for days, small but well organised groups of neo-nazis together with riot police were searching for the young people, street by street, and following groups of high school students from the riots to their houses, frightening them and their parents as well.

In small cities and towns, undercover policemen were going from shop to shop to spread false rumours and to inform the own-

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ers that wild anarchists were on their way from the big cities to come destroy their shops in the same way the television was portraying an exaggerated destruction of small shops in Athens. So when young people, anarchists, and leftists came out onto the streets of their small town with no intention to smash anything but banks, police stations, and government buildings, the shop owners treated them like vandals rather than their own children. However in most small towns during the insurrection the people generally had an attitude that these were “our own children” and the youth and comrades accomplished unbelievable actions on a local scale.

The influence of conservatism was also much stronger in some right wing towns. Conservatism, the power that keeps our life “as it was,” our mind “as we know it,” and our activities “as we’ve always done them,” was the strongest factor for sustaining normality before, during, and after the riots all over the country.

Many people opposed the insurrection and they had the power to express their disapproval much more openly and effectively in the countryside. In some of the towns the majority of the locals were obviously against the “tendencies” of the anarchists and the leftists. In these towns it was very difficult for the small number of isolated participants to sustain an insurrectionary enthusiasm for many days, even though in such places actions still took place day after day for weeks, proving that the passion for freedom doesn’t fear any authoritarian conservative majority.

The power of the State existed mainly in radio interviews, TV programming, and riot police in the streets. The work of the State was to offer excuses and reinforce the conservative defences of this society to sustain normality even in the middle of chaos, and to express with certainty that nothing will change; also to suppress the total chaos without having another dead body on the streets. It was crucial that they do it without filling up the stadiums with thousands of detainees, in order not to create images of dictatorship within the spectacle of social life.

The work of the mass media, as part of the regime, was to offer simplistic excuses for the “children’s revolt,” to not alienate their parents, to avoid speaking seriously about the specific reasons behind many targets of smashing and burning, to feed the worst fears of the conservative majority and to portray the anarchists as irrelevant to the phenomenon. In this way they were building the separation between the good children and the bad anarchists, immigrants, radicals, extremists-criminals.

How much did the limits come from the participants themselves?

In big cities and especially in Athens and Thessaloniki, physical exhaustion had a strong influence after all those days of tear gas, running around the city centre, hours of assemblies and all kinds of direct actions, creating and sustaining street barricades and liberated zones, smashing, burning, and lighting the riot police, the undercover police, and the neo-nazis over vast areas of the city... day after day and through the nights. The boys and girls sleeping inside the occupied universities for many days showed heroic physical strength.

When the schools reopened the students had to go back to class. Three weeks after the start of the revolt the university students started to think it was possible to lose credit for the whole academic year if the occupation of the universities continued after Christmas. After three weeks the students took to the streets less and less. Satisfied by the amazing personal experience of revolt and revenge against the State, they were tired from the street lighting. And they were pushed by their parents to return to normality. The students and youth who were not politically organised began to lose the feeling of togetherness of the first weeks, and started again to express scepticism towards the attitude, decisions, initiatives, and political analysis of the anarchists. Many continued to participate in different actions but they began to keep a distance from the central occupations and riots.

And the workers had their jobs waiting for them. Most of the participants had to work all day and then they participated in the actions in the afternoons and evenings, also expressing an amazing physical strength. The worst moment of the assembly for the occupation of the General Confederation of Greek Workers was when the insurgent workers started to speak out against spending a long time forming a deeper analysis because they had to go to sleep so they could work the next morning. Work was a limitation before, during, and after the insurrection.

After the third day the immigrants, many of whom lacked papers, faced a very strong backlash from the police and in public opinion. Police continued searching for them for months and in the following summer they arrested thousands of so-called illegal immigrants.

In the network of assemblies and conversations there began to reappear many different questions, debates, and the endless disagreements that characterise the Greek radical space. Many of these took the form of hostile dichotomies and enmities, like leftists vs. insurrectionists, anti-authoritarians vs. anarchists, artists vs. anti-artists, independent media journalists vs. anti-media activists, direct action vs. political messaging, naives vs. extremists, hooliganism vs. anti-statism, anti-statism vs. criminality anarcho-communism vs. post-anarchy junkies vs. serious political revolutionaries, looting vs. burning, and so on. Many people felt this and made conscious efforts to combat it. But by the third week, many of the debates had become long and tedious distractions to the disappointment we felt when we saw that the whole society would not rise up, as many people hoped it would in the early days.

A major defeat came early when the syndicalist hierarchy decided to cancel the nationwide general strike scheduled for December 10th. This strike had been announced long before the death of Alexis, but they cancelled it to avoid generalising the insurrection. The historical meeting with the working class failed to happen once more. Never trust the workers. The “working class” followed their

The insurrection will never end.

Maybe we need to start thinking about how the world we would like to live in looks like. We must use moments and images of our present life that we want to expand and activate in all their significance. We don't need any science-fiction plan for our future. We have everything here and now. We have to liberate it all from the State and the market and share it.

Revolution is when the society takes life in its hands and everything that now is merchandise again becomes a gift. Revolution is One Thousand Insurrections, nothing more, nothing less. Insurrections open paths, liberate space and time, reprogram Daily Life, change the relations, invent new words, break hierarchies, smash taboos and fears and limitations, achieving the highest possible public participation in projects and infrastructure that give us the chance to expand ourselves and share our abilities without limits. Insurrections are a never-ending fight, a constant struggle between desperation and self-restraint, apathy and action, fear and decisiveness, needs and passions, obligations and desires, obstacles and break-outs. Is it even possible to imagine such a thing? The experience of the insurrection showed us that those wild dreams we were too embarrassed to admit can actually become reality.

— Void Network [theory, utopia, empathy, ephemeral arts]
<http://voidnetwork.blogspot.com>

leaders, their political parties, their own syndicalist institutions, unions and organisations, their own idols and ghosts. The workers, the farmers, the petit-bourgeoisie did everything in its power to help the regime survive and bring everything back to normal.

So you see, normality was also hiding inside of us, not only around us.

The submission of the majority to the status-quo and the habitual repetitive behaviour of work and consumption kept millions of people off the streets. The inability of the insurrection to explain politically the reasons for the actions and to expand this understanding on a scale that could address the problems of common people was a failure that kept the entire society from exploding, from taking up the revolt and continuing it with their own decisions and actions.

For sure, people were not ready for social change, not even for a general confrontation with their own realities. The death of Alexis fell like a thunderclap on their pathetic situation but most of them were unable to understand what caused their own children, their own friends, their own neighbours, to revolt. The society could feel it, they could express empathy but they were not ready to translate it into a political confrontation with the regime.

In an insurrectionary way of thinking we can say that now, after the insurrection, the consciousness of millions of people has stepped forward and this is the main achievement of the revolt. The insurrection opens horizons. Many things that will happen in the future could never have happened before December.

All the thousands of people who participated offered an invitation to the others, the silent majority. When this silence fills your ears, echoing off the streets of a crowded city that wants to come back to normality after four weeks of endless riots and all kinds of actions, an inner voice forces you to pack up all the inspiration and experience you have won for yourself, to go back to your collective and continue the struggle from there.

Even with most of the markets destroyed the society generated a strange need to reproduce a pseudo-celebratory Christmas. Even though all the walls of the city were painted with the slogan “Christmas Postponed, We Have Insurrection” and the smoke of the tear gas and the smell of burned banks and the ashes of luxury shops still hung in the air, and the death of Alexis filled everyone’s thoughts, Christmas happened on December 25 just like every other year. The fucking mayor announced during New Year’s Eve from Syntagma Square, next to the brand new Christmas tree, this one protected by riot police, that we are all one, that we are all the same, and we are happy! Thousands of poor immigrants were clapping their hands below the stage, though they hardly understood a word. The three central occupations in Athens (Polytechnic, Nomiki, ASOEE) dissolved one or two days before Christmas.

And you walk in the city centre with your friends, four o’clock on New Year’s morning, and there are no riots anymore, and you want to smash everything around you and start again from the beginning. And an inner instinct says to you that there is still a lot of work to do before this world will explode”. And the insurrection continues travelling in space and time, but still you feel that something is missing, and there are a lot of things we have to take care of.

In what ways were the limits of the insurrection determined by factors in place before it started, such as the infrastructure of anti-authoritarian groups and projects and the culture of resistance in Greece?

For many decades the uncompromising fight of anarchists against the State and capitalism has found its chief expression in the confrontation with all the various bureaus and branches of police across the planet, as can be seen by the local police sections of Prague, Seattle, Genoa, Thessaloniki, Maastricht, Nice, Rostock, Berlin, Copenhagen, Paris, Cancun, Santiago, Buenos Aires, San Francisco, Mexico City, Hamburg, St. Paul, Turin, Johannesburg, Miami, Seoul, and many other places. Of course, as the State is not a

ery part of society. Also, they express the anarchist way of thinking directly to the other people of our times, and not through abstract theories and ideological labyrinths.

We have seen immigrants closed in concentration camps, we saw normality taking revenge expressed in laws as threats, we saw conservatism be the guardian and the protector of the worst side of humanity we saw greed and exploitation destroying our most beautiful dreams together with the forests, beaches, parks, squares, and hospitals. We saw apathy imprison our lives in fortress-like cities of commerce and mass stupidity...

Maybe now we are closer to the point of no return. To reach this point perhaps we all should have resigned from our jobs last year in December... Perhaps the unemployed had to replace the uncertainty of “personal failure” with the pride of an insurgent collective risk. Maybe the students had to leave school for at least a year of holidays, rediscovering the meaning of public education. Then, the creation of thousands of new websites, blogs, free movies, books, dvds, and pamphlets could undermine the dominance of the mass media. Free underground festivals can destroy the “mass entertainment industry” and occupied universities can offer free accommodation, food, counter-information and meaningful entertainment for thousands of people every evening.

We have to live collectively again, redefining contemporary political philosophy and revolutionary art. Perhaps the creative teams of friends, the affinity groups, the occupied parks, the squats and the social centres can become points for bringing alive all those dreams. We lost in the selfishness of our small, insignificant, individual illusions. We may have to fight against many fears, traps, deeply rooted lies, psychological complexes, and insecurities. And then we will link our daily lives with the most magical secret desires to transform the streets of Metropolis in precious moments of freedom and happiness.

The insurrection never ends.

- Occupations of government buildings and municipalities all over the country sent a message to society of a different understanding of public institutions and constituted victorious fights in different causes and struggles.
- The anti-nazi struggle sends the message that there is no mercy for the enemies of freedom.
- The anti-nazi demonstrations in solidarity with the immigrants made obvious to all immigrants that we are standing on their side (but not without criticism of their own limitations).
- Videos and media work uploaded to the Internet and used by mainstream TV channels proved that the police are working with neo-nazis against the immigrants and the social movements. Also they proved to everybody that the neo-nazis are a tool, the long hand of the State against any kind of social resistance.
- Independent amateur videos, like the video of the assassination of Alexis or moments of police brutality; played a very important role in the building of a new kind of public opinion.
- The creation of hundreds of blogs by all kinds of initiatives offered a digital space for the direct expression of the reasons and the theory of each struggle and attracted thousands of readers and participants. The blogs broke the authority and monopoly of mainstream mass media forever.
- The unstoppable writing, printing, and hand to hand free distribution of hundreds of different publications, pamphlets, books, cds, dvds and the creation and display of thousands of posters in all cities bring the analysis to a level capable of covering many different subjects and reaching nearly ev-

castle, the police are not the major protector of the State. Social apathy habit, acceptance of status, and fear of change are perhaps even stronger protectors of the State than the army and the comrades in Greece know this well. But, during the “Days for Alexis,” the police were the primary target of the attack. The reasons were obvious this time even to the conservatives. The struggle was righteous even for the reformists. The anarchist common-sense for once met with the social common-sense. Unfortunately common-sense is a great obstacle to wisdom.

The target of the struggle itself, the police, was the greatest limitation to the expanding of the insurrection to a general social insurrection. For most of the common people the police brutality was the target of this struggle and the anarchists, used to fighting against the police for ages, fought hardest alongside the people who wanted to express their rage against police brutality, together with them, sometimes even following them.

But generally they were unable to take the majority of the people with them in a total negation of the roots of the regime and against the real causes of this and all the other murders carried out by the State and capitalism. Most of the people were not ready yet to travel to the roots of their slavery. The society was not ready to face its own failures in the clear light of insurrection.

And the people in the struggle did not expand the dialogue as necessary to encompass all sides of everyday life. Of the hundreds of communiqué’s released, only a few could really offer an inspiring political explanation and a solid organisational solution. The affinity groups and the initiatives had the capability to offer high-quality analysis of the conditions and a hard critique of the regime, but they hadn’t enough experience to spread enthusiasm for a social victory visions of a world that could appear from the ashes of the old world, practical escape routes the dead-ends of a neo-liberalism in serious crisis, images from the future we are dreaming of, applicable plans for continuing the struggle once everything is already smashed and burned.

So when the rage started to fade there were no solid answers as to what should come next. Not even in our craziest dreams had any of us come so far. We walked for days and days like shadows inside our own struggles, wondering, through the smoke of the tear gas, about each next step.

Who has the proper answers, who can even narrate this story, who can offer solutions and answers about the way to general social insurrection? No one wanted to oblige the society to go further and the anarchists always dislike this role. Four weeks after the assassination of Alexis everyone knew that this is not a revolution and so nobody gave specific answers for what we had to do in order to go further. What could we do to keep the riots from ending? Is the never ending riot the way to social insurrection?

Most people that participated in the insurrection say that it didn't end. We find great truth in this, as thousands of us participate and stay active in many projects, struggles, and assemblies that were created after December in all the cities and towns. For most people Alexis is still alive. In today's struggles you can find him smiling behind actions, demonstrations, creative plans, and destructive visions.

What conflicts have developed after the uprising between groups that participated in it together? Are there bonds and connections that were possible to maintain during the uprising that have broken down since then?

During the insurrection many old friends lost each other forever and people or groups that hated each other for decades worked in projects and actions together. Many old groups transformed into something completely different and many new affinity groups have been created. As most of the Greek anarchists don't like each other, and deep differences separate groups and people, no one can speak definitively about what is happening and nobody clearly understands what is prepared and by whom. This total fragmentation is very useful during periods of "social peace" as it produces a vast variety of opinions, analysis, and initiatives. The police cannot in-

concerts, the socially aware hip-hop, punk, indie rock, drum 'n bass, techno & trance scenes attract thousands of young people to temporarily liberated public zones. They offer an existential contact with the underground cultures and the radical movements. The gatherings of the underground cultures, when they are connected in solidarity with the anarchist political space, offer an experiential introduction to the political and social awareness that cannot be replicated in books.

- The demonstrations in malls and luxury areas or in the metro stations transfer the message of insurrection to privatised public spaces at the centre of capitalistic illusions.
- The occupation of the National Opera Hall and interruption of the commercial shows created an example of a meeting point between the sphere of the arts and philosophy and the insurrectionary practices and ideas.
- The occupation of the building of the General Confederation of Greek Workers created a public, visible negation of the role of syndicalist leadership in the failures of workers' struggles over the last 100 years.
- The occupation of the offices of the newspaper editors by insurrectionary journalists and comrades active in the creation of underground media produced a lively meeting point for direct criticism to appear against the role of mass media in the building of social apathy.
- The occupation of the National Television Station studio by young artists and activists trashed the speech of the prime minister, expanded mistrust of the mass media, and sent the message onto the screen of every house in Greece: "Switch Off Your TV, Come Into The Streets."

- The solidarity movements encourage the people to continue fighting and take care, as much as possible, of the prisoners of this war.
- The open public solidarity for all prisoners, criminal and political prisoners equally expresses the total negation towards prison institutions, reveals the real causes of criminality in this society and brings the anarchist prisoners closer with all other prisoners, gaining respect and support for them inside the prison.
- The fight for Konstantina Kuneva and all other workers sends a direct message to the bosses that when they hit one of us they have to confront all of us. Also, it proves that the collective struggle can reveal subject matters and attract the focus of all society.
- All direct syndicalist struggles self-organised from the base prepare in the consciousness of the people, year after year, a deep-rooted, radical strategy that intervenes in the sphere of work.
- Indymedia works like a strategic centre for the organisation of the struggles and as a digital public space where all the announcements, debates, and invitations can gain attention. In a way, all comrades start their day reading the indymedia calendar to decide what social action or assembly they will participate in.
- The creation of pirate communal radio stations and digital radio stations -in universities and social centres sends the message of resistance on the radio waves and creates cultural and political communities around them.
- The critical mass parades, the street parades, the free party movement, the illegal rave parties, the squat events, the DIY

filtrate the movement, since such a thing does not exist. Hundreds upon hundreds of groups, people who've known each other for many years and share total trust and empathy they meet, appearing as if from nowhere and return to nowhere.

In a way, all this fragmentation created the strange situation where all these people, who knew each other for years but would never talk to each other, were suddenly speaking, spending time together, and fighting side by side. December produced strong feelings of solidarity and common struggle.

In the first months of 2009, huge assemblies, mostly accommodated in the university amphitheatres late in the afternoon, were taking place nearly every day. Sometimes people from one assembly started to participate in the one taking place before it, as they waited for it to finish and for the next one to start. Some of them, for example the Assembly for Solidarity with Immigrants, for Solidarity with December's Prisoners, the Fight for Worker Konstantina Kuneva, the Assembly of the School and University Students, the Assembly of Insurgent Doctors and Nurses, of Insurgent Artists, the Assembly of Unknown Artists, the Assembly of The Ones Here and Now and For All of Us, the Assembly of Workers and Unemployed, the Exarchia neighbourhood Initiative Committee, and many other Committees in different neighbourhoods, as well as assemblies happening in other cities all over the country were gathering from 100 to 400 active people every week. And to all these general insurrectionary assemblies of course we have to add all the separate meetings of collectives and groups that were participating in these general assemblies.

Throughout these months there was a poster on the walls of Athens with a wildly naive dadaist monster saying: "Obedience Ended! Life is Magical!" and for most of us this magical life was to jump from assembly to assembly preparing unbelievable things and putting them in practice with all those people. Those assemblies brought to life all different kinds of actions and projects and visions and crazy dreams you had from when you were fifteen years

old or from last week's late night talk with some friends or some secret plan you had with your lover and now was coming true.

Most of the initiatives and the assemblies of artists, romantics, non-ideological people, and creative activists shrank, lost the enthusiasm of the first weeks and became smaller and more solid creative groups. Various reasons forced people from these assemblies to go back to their individual creativity but many of these groups are still dedicated to their projects.

Week after week, and as people were coming closer and closer, the old conflicts, the differences, the diverse political standpoints and the different needs, expectations, strategies, and methods started to appear again. This brought back to the surface the old separations and the old debates. It proved that the differences were not just ephemeral misunderstandings or personal distrust but were based in deep analysis and long-term differences of practice and ways of thinking.

The interesting thing was that even though most of these general assemblies split or started to attract fewer people and to have less power and less influence, new ways of organising appeared. After some months of meetings the whole political space took new directions. The general assemblies were not useful any more as new coalitions, new friendships, and new contacts appeared. Different squats, social centres, and initiatives started to form after the end of the general assemblies. People and groups that met during the insurrection and the period of open creativity and massive open meetings after December now had experience with each other, they knew if they agreed or disagreed, they knew what were the directions and strategies of each group and so new projects, plans, and solid decisions took place. In this way the anarchists and other insurrectionists and radical activists avoided conflicts. The melting pot of general assemblies broke into much more effective meetings, laboratories of creative chaos, squats, and direct actions.

and state targets. The huge catalogue of arson attacks create a map of institutions, corporations, banks, and offices that society has to eliminate from social life for the people to be free and equal. In this way, the arsonists offer the society a signal that elevates mistrust of these specific targets and encourages suspicion regarding the exploitive function of these targets.

- The active anarchist student groups don't allow the bourgeoisie to control the university. These groups communicate day by day with each other and with all other students. They turn the university into a public space that can accommodate tons of public events every week, organised by comrades from other political and cultural collectives as well. Of course leftist organisations and cultural groups also participate in the struggle to defend university asylum and the struggle for keeping the universities open to the public overnight.
- The defence of public autonomous zones like parks and urban hills, universities as well as urban areas, street corners, squares, and meeting points like Exarchia and other similar points in the rest of Greece from police, mafia, drug dealers, neo-nazis and capitalist investors brings the people together. These meetings in public space produce an explosive mixture of all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds who get used to facing the policeman, the mafia, the drug dealer, the neo-nazi and the investor as an enemy. The day to day meetings in the public space empower the groups and the companies of friends to be ready and capable of fighting against the enemies at a moment's notice and to imagine that this area is something completely different from the surrounding territory.
- The empowerment of the imagination, intelligence, and critical mind is the best strategy.

it is also very important to use offset machines for thousands of copies of communiqué's and books that you hand out for free in your city. These practices go together with the unstoppable use of spray paint to write political slogans on every wall, signed with the circle-A, and to remove any neo-nazi graffiti. Also comrades go frequently to the central square of their city with a small electric generator and small sound system to play their music and read off their communiques, and to pass out pamphlets. With this method of counter-information they attract the focus of the people to specific social struggles, they raise solidarity and have endless dialogues with passers-by.

Some important struggles and strategies, as examples:

- The neighbourhood assemblies, organised with invitation posters from door to door, offer answers to local problems and connects them with general social problems.
- The occupied parks offer a direct connection between ecological problems and everyday urban life and produce new liberated public spaces where different kinds of people can meet and co-exist (or try to co-exist).
- The different new squats enable all different styles of anarchist thinking to achieve visibility.
- The new social centres offer workshops, free lessons, free food, cheap alcohol, free books, lectures, film shows, DJ sets, concerts, and open social meeting points for all kinds of people. They connect the political activists with common people and young students.
- The small urban guerilla arson groups continue fighting. Formed by people who know and trust each other 100% they continue to upgrade their weekly attacks against capitalist

How effective has government repression been in weakening the movements that started the uprising? What have been the most effective ways to resist this repression?

A basic characteristic of the Greek anarchist space is that through the influence of insurrectionary practices it refuses to see itself as a homogenous "movement" and especially as a movement of "resistance" or "direct action." The idea of direct attack is much more influential. The momentum of the attack is controlled by the groups and the initiatives and not by any collective, central decision-making process.

Of course, in periods of social mobilisation like the demonstrations against the privatisation of education or of health and public insurance or in big events like the European Union Summit or the G8 there is coordination and communication between the groups. But even under these circumstances the initiative for the direct attack is taken by the groups and individuals. This makes the things very complicated for the State and also for the people. No one can decide what will happen, no one knows what actually transpired until it has already happened.

The anarchist space has the ability to appear very powerful and disappear completely from the stage of confrontation, for short periods of recovery. These short periods without riots hypnotise the State and make the government believe it has other more important things to care about. In these periods of calm, the eye of authority is not focused on the anarchists. Meanwhile the arson groups commit unstoppable attacks against all kinds of targets. During these period hundreds of assemblies, events, public talks, film shows, free festivals, parties, lectures, workshops, and public non-confrontational demonstrations assure the visibility of the anarchists, autonomists, and anarcho-libertarians. All these political and cultural processes are also responsible for the never ending attraction of new people, the replacement of burnt-out people with fresh ones in the frontline of the riots and the preparation for a new cycle of intense confrontation.

It is like a wave. When it's up you can see it in the news, on TV, in the streets, everywhere. When it's down, you don't see it but you feel it. You meet with the wave because it is coming to you and moving unstoppably through the initiatives of thousands of different people.

What are some of the way that people have had to “recover” from the uprising? Legal troubles? Emotional trauma? Exhaustion?

There was not any emotional trauma from December. The use of molotov cocktails heals a crowd's panic and fear and takes back control of the streets from the police. Molotovs used as a defensive tool can keep the riot police away long enough for everyone to run safely away and recover from the tear gas or avoid arrest. When molotovs are used as offensive weapons together with hundreds of stones from broken pavement they give courage to the crowds and spread a feeling of massive power and the belief that they can accomplish amazing things.

As a slogan from December put it: “Action replaces Tears.”

Many people participated in the solidarity movement for the sixty-five that were arrested and who stayed in custody for two to eight months. Now all of them are free. The solidarity movement that took over the streets with massive demonstrations and counter-information, that held massive fund-raising concerts and organised movement lawyers has made clear to Greek anarchists that in the years to come solidarity must be one of the main methodologies of any movement that wants to participate in a serious confrontation with the regime.

There was no need for “recovering” after December. We also have to clarify that there was no end to the insurrection and especially no ending caused by legal troubles, emotional troubles, exhaustion, or repression. Rather, the anarchist space, in an instinctual and intelligent way, chose to disappear from the central highways and put into practice many other low-tension initiatives that enrich the struggle. This wise, self-preserving urban guerilla strat-

2. **Political Work:** based on direct connection with the problems of the society and not on ideological abstractions. The efforts to listen to the society keep in contact with the worries and fears of the people, give answers where it seems that there are no answers, and attack the causes of the problems, not just the results. The ability of the movement to play a serious role in the political world of the country depends on the creation of deep roots in the social struggles and the ability to inject anarchist ideas and practices into the hearts of common people and young radicals. This happens through the personal cultivation of critical minds and the collective creation of open, all-inclusive, public confrontation with all forms of authority.
3. **Cultural Work:** the meetings, the assemblies, the squares, the parks, and the public life tend to include people who have the courage to fight and the capability to think and create. For the first time in many years anarchists now are ready to achieve high visibility in this society and attract new people not only through their destructive power but also through the defence of public spaces (like the parks), and the creation of political spaces (like the squats and the social centres). Also important is the collective culture that allows all individuals to benefit from the communes without losing their personalities within them, as happens in the Left tradition of organising.
4. **Constant Spreading of Counter-Information:** the importance of typography, (not digital printing but 70cm x 50cm offset printing!) for printing thousands of copies of large posters and sticking them everywhere is vital. As all different groups produce many different posters, a whole spectrum of theory appears on the walls of the city. You don't need to read anarchist books any more. The theory is on the walls! Of course

out spectators or spectacles. And we can expand the mistrust of the people towards the corporate media through widespread anti-media campaigns, and through the total refusal to collaborate with the mass media in any way. This is a long-term strategy that in the meantime will cause people to rely on the Internet for information when something really important is happening.

We have to create our own myths, our own information, our own incredible actions and to cover them by ourselves. The people are not stupid. Society knows that TV news is full of lies and the younger generation doesn't watch TV news anyway.

But are we capable of really breaking the status of the big media corporations with our creativity? Are we capable of producing such interesting theory, such fascinating films, and such great stories? Are we ready to live great adventures that will spread in seconds all over the planet? Are we capable of finding ways to explain our visions to adults, even though we are adults ourselves? Are we ready to capture the focus of this society and offer an exit from here and some obvious, clear reason to break down the doors that keeps us locked inside?

What new tools and strategies do people have since December?

The most important characteristics are:

1. Consistency: efforts to offer answers and direct responses to all the moves of the State and to keep the fight alive with actions and events that take place almost every day. Also, there are conscious efforts to avoid suicidal or sacrificial moves that will cause arrests or hard defeats. The riots and the clashes with the police are well organised, well equipped, and they occur at the place and time when they'll have the greatest possibility of causing the most damage without paying a high price or putting people in serious danger. With these victories the struggle attracts new people.

egy also finds its expressions in the appearance of many different projects that started after December and now help the "movement" to deepen its roots in the society and in the local communities.

How has the government used the uprising strategically to strengthen its position, since December? Could this have been avoided?

The government didn't find ways to use the insurrection to strengthen its position. It was difficult to do such a thing as the insurrection was spread among all social classes and backgrounds. Only the immigrants were brought into a worse position as they faced a backlash and the police pogrom against those without papers, that occurred in June. The solidarity shown toward immigrants was strong but unable to protect them. A lot of effort is going into bringing the immigrants closer to the anarchist space but this task is not easy at all. The immigrants have their own limitations, their own interests, their own fears and wishes. Many of them they have a very difficult life and very different cultural and political or non-political backgrounds.

In what ways has the uprising put anarchists in a stronger position? In what ways has it used up energy without putting anarchists in a stronger position? Are there any ways it has put anarchists in a weaker position?

The anarchist movement in Greece underwent a lot of methodological changes over the last years in its efforts to come closer to society, to hear the problems of the people, to avoid an anti-social attitude without falling into reformism, and to try to find ways to participate in and radicalise the social movements of our times. All these efforts bore fruit during December.

The social centres that opened in all major cities of Greece during the last years, rented or squatted, offered the best preparation for the creation of strong, active circles of lighters and assemblies able to produce and spread analysis and propaganda everywhere.

Anarchist participation in the social struggles of the students and workers during the last years was also very important, and

it utilised two main strategies, changing according to the circumstances:

1) Separate, visible anarchist blocs, with flags, banners, posters, and pamphlets.

2) Radical direct action, smashings, attacks on the police with molotovs, sticks, and stones.

In this way the Black Bloc spread throughout the whole body of these mass demonstrations, even if only a minority were participating. The adoption of these two strategies by all anarchists according to the tension of the social struggle and the available momentum produced a common ground for different comrades and eliminated inner conflicts. And the anarchist participation empowered those social struggles, gained respect from other political organisations, produced common ground with many different social subjects and attracted many new people to anarchy.

The defence of Exarchia and other areas like it in Greece as autonomous public zones, including street corners and an everyday presence in “our own” cafés and bars, offered a constant meeting point that empowered the relations, the connections, and the coordination of actions. The creation of anarchist squats, social centres, occupied rooms in universities, concerts, events, film showings, and assemblies offered a sustainable ground for the cultivation of anarchist ideas and practices.

All these conditions are much more powerful now after December and it doesn't seem that there is any way to put ourselves in a weaker position. As long as we maintain the ability to listen to the heart and understand the mind of the society the State cannot defeat the anarchists.

Are you working with new people since December? More people?

Many young people who participated in the riots continue to avoid any political participation, so you will see many new people in the free festivals, DIY concerts, underground rave parties, and even the demonstrations, but not in the assemblies or discussions;

The way that non-violent practices blend into an insurrectionary context is happening here for the first time and it is one of the most extraordinary things to arise after December. The methodology with which the same people express both of these identities in an open and all inclusive experiment produces an explosive new social reality. It destroys the separation between insurrectionism and the creation of alternatives in an effort to avoid the transformation of insurrection into a new separate identity or lifestyle and at the same time to keep the social struggles from falling into reformism. The one strategy can overpass and solve the limitations of the other in a complementary and not an antagonistic manner.

How will anarchists overcome the power of the media?

...and how we will overcome nationalism, conservatism, cynicism, apathy and the influence of the heavily controlled public or private mass education?

Possibly we will overcome the power of the media only through the building of a strong underground anarchist culture, that will include thousands of dedicated “amateur intellectuals” in the same way that it now includes thousands of amateur DJs or punk band members. We will overcome the power of the media through the free distribution of all kinds of cultural products, books, cds, dvds, hand to hand and face to face. If we count, for example, that many hundreds of these things were published this year in Greece — each at between 1000 and 4000 copies and distributed for free all over the country — you can imagine that whole libraries could be filled with underground cultural products of theory creativity and propaganda if thousands of people put this approach into practice through personal and collective efforts.

When we transform information and culture into a gift our culture and information gains the highest possible authenticity and respect from the common people. Through the organisation of meeting points, events, and film showings we can transform information into a collective power. We have to entice people out of their prison cells of mainstream stupidity and into a culture with-

Never speak in public about your communications and your connections, especially with people you don't know or with people you don't trust 100%. This is the best form of communication with people previously outside of your circle. Of course, during this year of insurrection all of us gained some great new friends and comrades from a vast cultural background and from different economic classes.

What is something that anarchists are doing now that they never did before?

Trying to connect between two powers through the activity of the same people. As you Destroy you also Create, smashing and burning while making living, functional alternatives. This is an end to the separation between violence and non-violence forever: the violent becomes the non-violent and the non-violent becomes a monster that can confront all kinds of power. There is no morality of non-violence any more in Greece, even the non-violent activists agree with this. There are no non-violent anarchists, and even the sensitive, naive romantics are ready to confront the tear gas, build barricades, and light the police.

As one poster proclaimed from walls all over Athens just before the elections, "Sometimes the most violent thing is to do nothing. Don't vote!"

Violence and Non-Violence are not identities or morals. The same people who fight against the police have the experience and the knowledge to create a park, make non-confrontational political and social demos, write a book, sing a song, play with children in the playground. The same people who make art happenings and dance in front of the police with the drums and the puppets will fight back with molotovs and stones along with the Black Bloc when the police come closer, and they will help their comrades to escape. The same people whom you will meet behind the barricades are the people who will organise a grocery shop with organic vegetables and fruits from the anarchist farms, and all of them participated and will participate again together in the insurrection.

however the youth in general seem to be much more critical towards mainstream TV culture than they were before December. On the other hand there is a whole new generation of young anarchists, especially in the countryside, who have become politically active. But the greatest achievement of December is that thousands of people who were anarchists before December but did nothing more than hang around in Exarchia or go to some demonstrations have now become active, they have found confidence in themselves, and they are organising different projects, writing pamphlets, taking part in the struggle.

Are the arguments and disagreements different? For example when you disagree with someone, does it end the same way now as before December; or is there more possibility, more learning, more solidarity?

This unfortunately has a lot to do with personal relations and local ways of analysis. For sure, it is different from city to city. As an example, the classical conflict between the different sections of Alpha Kappa and the Black Bloc differs completely from city to city. In some areas the people are old friends who hate each other, in other places they organise demonstrations together, in other cities they don't even say hello. In some cities the punks like the Black Bloc and in other cities they punch each other in the squares. In some cities the anarcho-junkies hate the Black Bloc, in other cities they show respect. In some cities the anarcho-hooligans fight with the Black Bloc, in other cities they fight with Anti-authoritarian Current.

The classical technique for solving theoretical and practical differences in the Greek anarchist space continues to be the trading of punches between two crowds, in the middle of the square or during a party in the university or some day after two people have had a fight. These continue to happen same as always. There are always people in every group who try to avoid this method, but it is still a common practice. Generally speaking, December gave all kinds of groups an excuse to explain the spirit and the meanings

of the insurrection in their own way Everybody finds the absolute verification of their own beliefs and conclusions within the spirit of the insurrection. In the long run this fact might cause bigger disagreements than before. For the time being, many people try to create bridges and keep the personal communication open between different people and theoretical streams.

Are there any weaknesses the movement is refusing to look at?

Yes, obviously there are many weaknesses because if they didn't exist we would have completed the "revolution." But do we have the time to think about our weaknesses, to reconcile our conflicts, renegotiate our beliefs and rearrange our strategies? Unfortunately after the self-validation of December the egoism of many comrades only got stronger, so it's more difficult to look at the weaknesses.

On the other hand, a great difference between the Greek movement and the US movement, for example, is that we don't spend so much time analysing our defeats, we don't speak on public radio, in magazines, newspapers, or books about our problems. We don't overemphasise our inabilities and of course we don't write books or pamphlets or posts on the internet about our inner conflicts and our different opinions on a specific subject. In a way this is much better. The weaknesses of the movement are not written in books or on the internet, you face them on the street, behind the barricades, outside of the assemblies, or you speak about them on a street corner, late at night, drunk, face to face with your friends and comrades.

Where do you think the movement will be one year from now?

It will be in many different new squats and in the old ones. In new social centres and in the same old squares, the old cafés and new bars created by friends and comrades, a place to feel safe, where you can speak about everything. It will be in taverns getting drunk together, building courage for late night attacks against riot police squads around the city. It will be hunting the neo-nazis from street

to street in order to fuck them. Where do you think the movement will be?

It will be in a war against apathy, stupidity and defeatism. It will be in arson attacks against all kinds of State and capitalist targets. It will be in free festivals and crazy all night parties, it will be drunk and happy having sex or finding a new boyfriend. It will be in the smile of a young boy behind his mask and in the hands of a girl throwing stones at the policemen. It will be all around the country in the posters on the walls, the communiqué's, the books, the hundreds of new blogs talking about new actions, It will be in the graffiti everywhere, an "a" in a circle, or the squat symbol, or the symbol of chaos, the symbol of entropy the symbol of void or just your tag, your name that means Fuck The Police... It will be in the heart of thousands of new people all around the world and it will be here still, on the same spot where the State assassinated Alexis, defending it from the rank smell of the policemen.

Has the movement gotten more or less arrogant since December?

In the Greek language "arrogant" means the person who believes that he is more important than he is, or the person who underestimates those around him. In this way yes, many people from the movement became more arrogant towards the State and the police. But many people try to keep themselves in mental balance with dark jokes.

"Arrogant" in Greek also means a specific stance of a warrior's body to not feel fear and to stand still and proud while defending your point, to have the power to defend your turf and expand into the territory around you. Arrogant means to have the inner power to start fights with enemies who are much stronger than you. In this way yes, the movement became much more arrogant.

Can you describe contact you have with people who were previously outside of your circle? What new communication and connections do you have?