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Open letter about the prison escape attempt

Pola Roupa

March 15, 2016

Under other circumstances, this text would be written by Revolutionary Struggle. However, the outcome of the attempt to break out the comrade Nikos Maziotis of Koridallos prison obliges me to speak personally.

On February 21st [2016], I attempted to break out Revolutionary Struggle member Nikos Maziotis by helicopter. The operation was planned so that other political prisoners could join us, who wished to make their way to freedom. Details of the plan, how I managed to evade the security measures and board the helicopter armed, have no special significance and I will not refer to them; despite the fact that there has been a lot of misinformation. Just for the sake of clarity, I will only mention that the plan was not based on any previous helicopter prison escape, it is not associated with any findings of plans not yet implemented, and I do not have any relation to another fugitive person despite media portrayals to the contrary. Also, this attempt was not preceded by any escape plan that “was wrecked”, as reported by some media.

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<actforfree.nostate.net/?p=22985>. Retrieved on 19/07/2024
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A quarter of the journey after our takeoff from Thermisia in Argolida, I took out my gun and I asked the pilot to change course. Of course, he did not understand who I am, but he realised it was an attempted prison break. He panicked. He attacked me pulling out a gun – a fact he “omitted”. Also because they will likely try to refute the fact he was armed, I remind everyone that there are publicly available reports about the discovery of two mags in the helicopter. One was mine, but the second wasn’t mine. The second mag was from his own gun, which he dropped from his hands during our scuffle during flight. And as for me, of course I had a second mag. Would I go to such an operation with only one mag?

He lost control of the helicopter and shouted in panic “we will get killed”. The description that was presented of a helicopter substantially unmanageable is true. But these images did not result from my actions, but his. The helicopter was losing altitude and swirled in the air. We flew a few meters over electricity wires. I screamed to him to pull up the helicopter, to do what I tell him so no one will get hurt.

Within no time at all, we were on the ground. Those who speak of a dispassionate reaction of the pilot, apparently judging from the result, don’t know what they are talking about.

Instead of doing what I told him to do, he preferred to risk crashing with me in a collision of the helicopter, which didn’t happen by chance. It goes without saying that upon entering the helicopter and trying to gain control of it, to direct it to the prisons, I had made my decision. If he refused to do what I told him, I would naturally react. Those who claim I was responsible for the uncontrolled descent of the helicopter, from 5,000 feet to the ground, what did they expect? That I would have said “if you don’t want to come to the prisons, never mind”? I fired my gun and we engaged – both armed – in a scuffle during flight.

He preferred to risk crashing with me on the mountain than to obey. When we finally landed on the ground with speed, even though I knew the operation was lost, I had every op-

THE PRISON ESCAPE OPERATION WAS A REVOLUTIONARY CHOICE. I ATTEMPTED THE PRISON ESCAPE FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION. ALL MY LIFE I STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION. I WILL CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Pola Roupa
member of Revolutionary Struggle

portunity to execute him. I consciously decided not to do so. Although I knew that with this decision I was endangering my life or freedom, I did not execute him even though I had the chance. He himself knows this very well. The only factor that held me back was my political conscience. And I took this decision, risking my own life and possibility to get away.

Regarding the prison escape operation itself, it's obvious that all possible safety measures were taken in order to safeguard the undertaking against the armed guards patrolling the prison perimeter, and I even carried a bulletproof vest for the pilot as well. In this case, the purpose was to make the prison break happen in a way that would ensure the lowest possible risk for the helicopter, the comrades and, of course, the pilot. I acted with the same thought when we landed on the ground; despite the fact that the operation failed because of the pilot; despite the fact that he was armed. I essentially put his life over my own life and safety. But I am to reconsider this specific choice.

Organising to break out Nikos Maziotis was a political decision, as much as it was a political decision to liberate other political prisoners as well. It was not a personal choice. If I wanted to only liberate my comrade Nikos Maziotis, I wouldn't have chartered a large helicopter – a fact that made the operation's organising more complex. The aim of the operation was the liberation of other political prisoners as well; those who actually wanted, together with us, to make their way to freedom.

This action, therefore, despite its personal dimensions that are known, was not a personal choice but a political one. It was a step in the path to Revolution. The same goes for every action I have carried out and for every action I will make in the future. These are links in a chain of revolutionary planning aimed to create more favourable political and social conditions, for broadening and strengthening revolutionary struggle. Below I will refer to the political basis of this choice; but first I

have to talk about facts, and the way I have operated until now in regard to some of these facts.

As I previously mentioned, every action I carry out concerns an act related to political planning. In the same context, I expropriated a branch of Piraeus Bank on the premises of Sotiria Hospital in Athens last June [2015]. With this money, in addition to my survival in “clandestinity”, I secured the organising of my action and financing of the operation for the liberation of Nikos Maziotis and other political prisoners from Koridallos women’s prisons. The reason I refer to this expropriation (I couldn’t care less about the penal consequences of this admittance) is because, at this time, I consider it absolutely necessary to disclose how I operate in regard to the safety of civilians, who in certain circumstances happen to be present in revolutionary actions I am involved in, and my perspective about this issue on the occasion – always *mutatis mutandis* – of the prison escape attempt.

In the case of the expropriation of Piraeus Bank branch, what I mentioned to the bank clerks when we walked into the bank was that they should not press the alarm button, because this would endanger their own safety, since I wasn’t willing to leave the bank without the money. I did not threaten them, nor would they ever be in danger because of me. They would only be in danger because of the police, if cops arrived at the spot and we subsequently had an armed clash. And the police would only arrive if any clerks pressed the bank alarm. This was a development which they themselves wanted to avoid. Because people who happen to be present in every such action are not afraid of those trying to expropriate, but instead the police intervening. Besides, it’s really stupid for anyone to attempt to defend money belonging to bankers. And for the record, when a female clerk told me “we ourselves are also poor people,” I suggested to her that we step over to a “blind” spot, where cameras can’t see us, to let her have 5,000 euros, which she did not accept, apparently out of fear. If she had accepted the money,

she can be sure I would not speak publicly about it. And one detail: what I was holding was a medical apron to conceal my gun while waiting outside the bank; it was not a towel(!), as mentioned several times.

In every period of time, in the struggle for Revolution – as is also the case in all wars – at times the revolutionaries are obliged to seek the assistance of civilians in their fight. The historical examples are too many – an attempt to document them would fill an entire book, and this isn’t the time to expand on the matter – both in Greece and in armed movements and organisations in other countries. In such cases, however, we essentially ask them to take sides in a war. Once someone refuses to assist, their stance is not just about the particular practice, but an overall hostile stance against the struggle. They endanger or cancel undertakings, they put the lives of fighters in danger, they throw obstacles in the way of a revolutionary process. They take a position against a social and class war.

Neither at Piraeus Bank branch nor during the attempted helicopter escape did I make my identity known. Therefore, no one involved in these cases knew that those were political actions. But after the failed escape attempt, and given that – as I already mentioned – I had the opportunity to kill the pilot but I didn’t, risking my own life, I have to make the following public: from now on, whenever I need the assistance of civilians again, and if I deem it necessary, I will make my identity known from the outset. Since my mission in any case concerns the promotion of the struggle for overthrowing the criminal establishment, let everyone know that any possible refusal of cooperating and effort of obstructing the action will be treated accordingly.

I am, of course, aware of the personal details of the pilot, but I did not threaten his family. I would never threaten families and children.

This is my balance sheet after the escape attempt, one I must make public.