

Letter from prison

Yiannis Dimitrakis

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On the afternoon of 16/1/06 an armed robbery took place at the National Bank of Greece in the centre of Athens. After an exchange of fire with 2 cops from a special unit, one of the participants Yiannis Dimitrakis, was seriously injured when shot by the cops 3 times in different parts of his body. The other 4 participants managed to get away from the scene with about 50,000 euro, with one of them also slightly injured. Yiannis, who openly admitted that he is an anarchist, stayed in different hospitals for a few months till he recovered, then he was sent to Korydallos prison of Athens. In another parody of the Greek justice system Yiannis was charged with 7 robberies! Also he was charged with numerous counts of attempted murder, topped with the anti-terror law! Its not the first time that a fixed charge is given towards anarchists in Greece. This is the letter he sent from prison on the 23rd of June where he explains a lot about what has happened in the meantime and his personal position on the robbery.

Comrades,

This letter is my first attempt to communicate and comment on the events that took place and I experienced due to my participation in the bank robbery of the National Bank of Greece in the centre of Athens on January 16th. Before I go on to enlarge upon the actual events, I'd like to say a few things in regard to the motives that lay behind my choice in taking such action and what it means to me.

For me, present-day society is a wagon following a pre-defined course that is leading straight to its complete dehumanization. The role of its passengers, its wheels and its horses—in other words of its driving force—is played out by ourselves, the people. The wagon's driver has the cruel face of capitalism and its co-driver is a faceless and vague State. The path the wagon follows is of course not strewn with rose petals and flowers but with blood and human bodies. With individuals or groups of people that wanted either to resist and change its frantic course or stand as an obstacle in front of it. The list of those is long: insubordinates, rebels, leftists, anti-authoritarians and anarchists fill many bloody pages in this journey's storybook. Somewhere in between the last two groups is where I place myself. So, to the degree of consciousness that my world-view and perception offers me, what I can easily discern is that present-day society relies only on violence, oppression and exploitation. A society which aims at the loss of human dignity in every way, by every means. This is something that is experienced and received by each and every one of us in their everyday life, either by being forced to deal with State institutions or at

our work-place and from those who manage and profit from our work. Employment, work: words whose true meaning is wage-slavery, enslavement. Work and its surplus-value are the pillars of today's economic system while the individuals that carry it through and the circumstances under which this takes place confirms that people are treated as expendable goods, as modern slaves. We see workers rotting away from illnesses that are due to their long-term exposure to hazardous substances, that die either by falls or by explosions in the capitalist temples they are building, that lose their urge, their liveliness, their spontaneity, all that characterizes a would-be free person. Working exhausting hours and employed in two or three jobs simultaneously just for a few crumbs. When to cover their most basic needs a person is obliged to mortgage himself to those cold-hearted oppressors otherwise known as banks and, under the burden of this financial responsibility, start showing signs of subservience and submission, whereas in the case that they cannot eventually cope and are led to bankruptcy end up committing suicide or are publicly ridiculed by the mass media as one more human wreckage, leads us to one conclusion. The State and capital, in order to continue existing, manufacture modern-day helots who can easily be compared to the Spartan ones. A system which on the altar of profit sacrifices human lives inconsiderably and with audacity. As I've already mentioned, one of the main partners in this crime are banks which are nothing more than legitimate loan-sharks and are partly to blame for the plundering that's taking place at the expense of peoples' work.

Taking all the above into consideration we can understand Brecht's Maki when he asks 'What is a bank robbery compared to the establishment of a bank?'. But also taking me into consideration who, wanting to resist on a personal level—as on a mass level all those that know me personally know that I have participated as much as I could—to my future yoke, to determine the conditions and quality of my life myself, to put into practice my refusal to 'work' and also to play the role of yet another productive unit, of yet another wheel in the wagon, wanting to attack the monstrosity that is called a bank (however at the same time having no illusions that I'll inflict any major blows to this economic institution), choosing to mark a course of dignity in my life, I decided to rob a bank. An act which I consider, amongst many others, as revolutionary and which deservingly claims its own place as such. In all honesty I must admit that the money I was going to acquire through the robbery was going to have me as the end-recipient. At the same time, however, as an anarchist and as a person who wishes to show their solidarity through deeds I'd be one of the first to actively and with joy help in contributing to monetary needs, which might come up in this scene to which I belong. Finally, what I'd like to point out here is that all that I have mentioned up to now does not in any way mean that I support a notion that whoever is an anarchist should be a bank robber or that whoever works is enslaved.

Going on now to recount the chain of events that took place, I take as a starting point the scene where I'm lying on the ground seriously injured by the cops' fire and I have to let myself be taken into the State's 'warm' embrace. The welcoming is to, say the least, impressive as an image, as most people saw, but also exemplary towards anyone who is considering acting in a similar way. A pack of hunters in blue uniforms and me in the role of the injured game being surrounded and receiving 'friendly' kicks—which later I found out were part of the framework to disarm me—and comments like 'we fucked you' or 'you're not such a big shot now, you fucker?!' among other brave words. Finally, being handcuffed from behind despite the fact that I couldn't move or breathe, having received bullets in my lungs, liver and elbow, completes the picture. I refer to these events without the slightest trace of bitterness, complaining or disappointment, as I didn't expect any better treatment from my enemies in the case that I did fall into their hands. In

any case, a similar attitude has been displayed to less 'dangerous' villains, and, as a mere example, I'd like to remind you of images such as the arrest of protesters and immigrants or the pogroms at gypsy camps, just to name a few. I am referring to these events however as, in a tragic and insane way, these are the people who will come forward at my trial as the ones who defend and honour human life and dignity, while I'll be in the role of the immoral, hardened, violent and heartless criminal. For the time that I was kept at Athens General Hospital I literally experienced the violation of every human right as an arrestee and later as a prisoner. There were early signs regarding how I was going to be treated at my parents first visit to see me at the ICU (Intensive Care Unit). While there are very strict rules about the number of visitors—even in the case of relatives—an armed to the teeth police officer barges in and places himself in a corner which as a consequence destroyed any concept of at least sharing a private moment with my family, as from the drugs-treatment I was receiving I couldn't even open my mouth, let alone hold a conversation. Following this incident and at an unsuspected moment, while in a hazy condition from the heavy drugs treatment I was undergoing due to the pains I had from my wounds, and swimming in a sea of tubes that were coming out of my body, I realized that a guard was now permanently positioned inside the room and right next to me. This situation really irritated me and didn't allow me to rest and I made it known to him. Strangely enough he then left the room and instead stood right in front of it. Of course when the doctors and the head of the ICU came to examine me I reported this incident and, truly astounded and irritated by the event, they got rid of the cop, wondering who had let him in. Here, a big thank you needs to be given on my behalf to all those people, from the doctors to the nurses, who gave me attention and who, irrelevant of their own political beliefs, took care of me as best they could. Some of these people also resisted as much as they could to the different pressures put on them by the prosecuting authorities, either in regards to my guarding or my transport and exit from the ICU. On the third or fourth day of my hospital treatment I was informed that prosecutor Diotis was coming to see me later that afternoon. I must confess that to start with I wasn't sure whether in my condition I would be up to facing him. The head of the ICU, however, assured me that he would be by my side for the duration of the interrogation and made it known to me that due to my condition I had a right to stop the process at whatever moment, something that I was unaware of. So when Diotis arrived escorted by a security police chief and another person whose official role I can't remember, but was probably the interrogator, and as soon as each of them had spoken to me for a couple of minutes I signalled to my doctor that I wanted them to leave. On his way out Diotis told me that in any case they were going to find who else was with me and that to talk now would just make it easier for me. Of course his words fell on deaf ears. The second time he came I was given a chance to understand who Diotis really is when in a lively exchange of words with the head of the ICU a very strange phrase slipped out of his mouth. Having finished his monologue and having delivered me the arrest warrant and the list of accusations I was facing he asks me to sign. My doctor immediately intervenes and explains to him that I am incapable of doing such a thing at the moment and asks him to leave as my strength was deserting me. Then Diotis, to both our surprise, answers: 'Of course I respect the boy's condition and I don't intend to give him a hard time, because if I did I could just pull on his tubes a little and put his pressure up to 50.' I realized at that moment what would have happened in that room if the doctors weren't people with willpower and values but simply pawns. I would have, no doubt, discovered the 'famous' interrogation methods that prosecutor Diotis has used in the past.

After this incident the conditions of my detention really worsened. Two armed guards were permanently placed inside the ICU and pressure was put on the head of the department for me to be dismissed earlier, which was achieved. I was then transferred to a specially laid out room in the Eye Clinic with the excuse that they would be able to guard me more efficiently. In this new space in which I was placed I was sleeping with two undercover cops by my side. Another two cops were permanently stationed in front of the open door of the room while one character kept trooping in and out every half hour to check up on things, another 5–6 cops were in the waiting room and an unknown number of individuals in the corridor outside. The result of all this was for me not to be able to sleep for 3–4 days and to feel like a monkey in the zoo as every jumped-up cop came in looking at me up and down and discussing me on his mobile phone or with his colleagues. I was at the end of my tether and so made a complaint to the head of security about it all who replied that I was a prisoner now and that they'll be the ones to judge how I should be guarded and that they're protecting me from myself meaning, if you can believe it, that they were watching over me so I didn't commit suicide. Other amazing scenes that took place included me, still bed-ridden, relieving myself in front of them while they watched undisturbed, or me being handcuffed to the bed inside the ICU, again with the excuse of preventing me from committing suicide and other such incidents. Like the attempt to kidnap me from the Eye Clinic and to transport me to the hospital at Korydallos prisons while I still had stitches in from the surgical incisions, falsely claiming that the doctors had given their permission and which in the end was, for the time being, avoided due to my parents notifying the doctors. I believe the sole purpose of all this was to humiliate me, to make me lose all sense of self-respect and to generally make me realize the fact that I was a captive in their hands and I no longer had any rights. These situations drove me to think of the hospital and prisons at Korydallos as a haven of mental tranquillity.

In the meantime, while I was waiting to be transferred to Korydallos prisons, we all saw an orchestrated attempt by the prosecuting authorities to manufacture culprits with their only indication being that they belonged to my circle of friends or to the anarchist scene. I am now sure that the taking in of people to be interrogated, the making public of names and the issuing of arrest warrants were triggered by the police finding some of my personal photos, calls to and from my mobile or whatever document proved I had a friendly relationship with these individuals. I want to express my solidarity to all of them. According to the police and journalist scenarios, we form an, unknown at least to me, 'gang in black' which consists of 10–15 individuals, anti-authoritarians and anarchists (which leaves open an option for the authorities involving other individuals) and this gang has committed another 6 bank robberies, goes on holidays to expensive resorts, has close ties to Passaris and so on. As far as the money that had been gathered by various comrades to cover needs of the anarchist scene and which I kept in a bank deposit box, it was labelled as the product of robberies. As an outcome of all the above, I ended up defending myself in front of the interrogator for 7 bank robberies, for attempted homicide and for money-laundering, plus being put under the anti-terrorist law. That the State and its underdogs have been tarnishing peoples' reputation as a standard tactic for years now, to inflate briefs, to manufacture culprits, organize trials that are judicial parodies and generally in all kinds of ways to demonstrate their hatred and vengefulness towards whoever resists, is well known. One question however forms when taking all the above into serious consideration. What kind of treatment and what kind of methods will the State use in the case of the arrest or voluntary coming forward of the three comrades in order to get a confession out of them and send them to trial but also how will

a 'fair trial' be secured for whoever goes through with this procedure? Finally I have one thing to say to all those who are planning our physical, ethical and political annihilation, once and for all: no matter what dirty and unethical means they use, no matter how much they hunt us down and imprison us, they will never crush us and tame us. Because those who are just are those who revolt, not those who snitch and bow their heads down. I also want to say a big thank you to all those who have chosen, chose or will choose to give me their support and solidarity, by whatever means, even though the nature of my case is, I believe, very difficult.

In struggle

Giannis Dimitrakis

Korydallos Prisons, 5 June 2006

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