



## FOREWORD

As this issue of *The Barbarian* was finishing, the events surrounding the hunger strike of Nikos Romanos began to take place: marches, occupations, riots. The crisis was said to be over, now it's back in full swing. Nothing much was happening, and then all of a sudden the streets were ablaze. We witnessed with surprise the power of the unpredictable: within a month normality was turned upside down. How quickly things change in today's world!

The hunger strike of Romanos was an important struggle during this time, all the more because it reminds us to avoid a facile *thanatophilia*, a love of death and martyrdom. However, what are we aiming at? Revolutions concern not death, but *life* and improving it. In this particular struggle, the government was forced to concede to the demands of an anarchist prisoner of armed struggle and his supporters on the streets, but it did so in a way as to take all that it could, enforcing electronic monitoring and altering conditions for prisoners who wish to study. After all, we're in a war, and this was a battle. It also showed

that classical distinctions of war are certainly useless for evaluating what went on. As the anecdote tells us, a US Army general met a Vietnamese one some years after their war. "You never won a battle", the American general resentfully claimed. "That may be true, but it is also irrelevant", replied the general from Vietnam. In moments of revolt the typical view of victory or defeat presents a false analysis.

Despite the name ('Romanos') in which the demonstrations occurred, revolt itself is not about a cause. Rather, it grows out of an event which ignites something –imagination, anger, hope – that is bigger and may even be difficult to define. No one can own an event, it just seems to take off, without anyone predicting why or how this particular cause provokes so much popular activity. When the people take to the streets, rather than fitting into an organized project, perhaps what is worth celebrating is not the success of a one worldview, program, idea, but the random and spontaneous rupture which catches us all unawares. So, this specific event never belonged to anyone, it

wasn't unified but polymorphic, and this was how it was spoken of at the time. Actually, it would be better to say that it was another occasion to find yourself in unusual places; like the Trade Union Offices (GSEE) – a luxurious place, by the way – invaded by black hooded people, watching out for an eventual police presence down in Alexandras avenue from a beautiful terrace, or participating in 300 person assemblies, or visiting the deserted Karagiozis museum and participating in a much smaller assembly, writing texts, translating, constantly reflecting about Romano's fight but also about what was happening, and feeling that whatever it was it was within our grasp. And then there were all those red stars upon the Greek map which indicated the places and spaces that had been occupied, more and more, from day to day. Demonstrations and their riots ended in Exarchia. Finally, it was also an opportunity to take back some squats, like *Parartima* in Patra. The fight inside the prison was becoming a general fight, and an incontestably good way to meet with others, discuss and act upon a variety of interconnected themes.

This series of events was a great political lesson because it showed the strengths and limits of the movement, and also reminded us that revolution is never one big night or decisive struggle, but many little combats. On the one hand, a capacity to stalemate the government was clearly manifested, on the other hand, a clear incapacity to move to checkmate. To become more dangerous still, we would have to open up the assemblies and break old routines. Assemblies function best by spreading knowledge and creating the capacity for a diversity of actions, and so often breakdown when they attempt to judge actions beforehand. After all, revolutions are decided neither by a vote, nor by the decision of one individual: they are far closer to a spiritual union based on mutual acclaim for acts undertaken, not something based upon compromising and managing political differences.

Of course, on a larger scale, we should also admit a general uncertainty concerning the future of revolt, related to a prevailing political disorientation in our time. Yet rather than a source of weakness, it should be considered as a strength. This great uncertainty about the future and how it will take shape also invites us to question what actions or concepts of classical revolution are still viable. But in this sense, the formally empty but practically pluralistic content of anarchism also expresses something like the general situation: a desire to change the world, but not to dominate the world; a distrust of universal and global solutions, but a determination to change our daily lives.

To resume, this struggle of riots and occupations concerning Nikos Romanos took place and then Samaras called earlier presidential elections, a gamble that appears to have backfired, leaving Samaras with his pants down.

It seems that an implicit right-wing view was that fire and trouble in the streets was beneficial to the ruling party because it could negatively affect Syriza who tend to be equated with images of chaos and instability. This was not the case. An aspect of Greek parliamentary politics is that when the ruling party proposes a presidential nominee but then does not gain enough votes for this largely symbolic position, new elections are called. As we write, there will be new general elections, where it appears probable that the supposedly 'radical-left' Syriza will win. When a new political reality presents itself, we will need more finesse because power will not be represented by the grey men in suits but rather by an image that appears closer to our own. How do grassroots movements and self-organization as a broad mass relate to a new power like Syriza which is already cozily wrapped in a blanket woven from a general social movement discourse? And how will anarchists respond? Will this uncontrollable diversity be taken advantage of by the new power? Perhaps there are some of us who will find themselves fueling the new machine of power, just as we saw Syriza benefit from the sparks of December 2008. The Left consider themselves to be the realistic and practical radicals, and anarchists the well-meaning but foolishly misguided idealists. We think the opposite is rather the case.

Syriza signifies one thing which we are seeing all over Europe: the old established political parties and their proposals are crumbling, as no one buys into their stale and discredited promises, while fringe parties of all kinds are moving center stage, leading us to a world of increased unpredictability. And here, the *metapolitefsi*, the post-Junta political system, is truly over, the old managers of governing have given

way. Nonetheless, between Syriza and radical revolt lies a completely different ethical and political project: Syriza will work within the confines of the present system, they might *try* to reform the state, but not its prisons, parliament and police. Radical revolt, however, puts the basic structure of all these into question.

And yet, despite all this uncertainty, we must not lose ourselves in pessimism, negativity, and inaction.

While all 'undesirables' struggle to live today, others live to struggle. Recent events have given us a broader field to think about: Romanos on strike, the witch-hunt of Operation Pandora in Spain, the slow march of neo-fascism across Europe, the murder of Remi Fraise near Toulouse, of 43 radical students in Mexico, of young black men in the USA. All of these point clearly to one obvious fact: a dying world has declared war on its youth, and by corollary, on all of its undesirables. It has no future to offer the poor, the pensioners, the immigrants, the dissidents. The world presents us with a bleak picture, however because of this, it's quite clear the only possible future left is a revolt that overturns all the rotten structures of the present. So with all these ongoing developments, the old slogan from the Greek movement still rings as true as ever:

*Nothing is over, everything continues!*

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