

taken to hospital to get searched by X-ray and is put in solitary. Around 9pm his inmates start burning blankets, breaking doors and climbing on the roofs. They throw roof tiles at the police cars stationed outside the prison. They protest against the cancellation of day releases and the lengthening of sentences after April's revolts. After negotiating they eventually go back to their cells.

Giannis Dimitrakis writes about the revolts

The days and nights on the roof of Malandrino prison have found us united, free from any addiction. Each of us ignored our personal interests, but not the common aims and actions which have brought us all to our common destiny in prison. United as a fist, against hunger, thirst and weather, fixed, still and resolute in our objective – the meeting of our demands.

We didn't ask, we demanded the removal of all contested laws, so we could raise our face up again. We all said NO to the drugs and addictive substances which every type of power distributes generously for the functioning of jails. You've seen, and you'll see it again, the detainees feel the bitter pain of the batons, the smoke of tear gas and other chemicals. You've seen, and you'll see it again, detainees pushed back with plastic bullets.

The result of those revolts, the experiences we've had and the problems we encountered need to be analysed and reflected on. Some might say the struggle was useless and a failure, but in the detainees' souls there's no space for defeatism and resignation. On the contrary, amongst us there have been fundamental stirrings, exchanges of opinions and thoughts. We have calculated our possibilities and we've learnt enough to be more lucid in our requests next time. We owe it to the fighters of the Resistance, and also to the ones that came before and after them. We owe it to all those Greeks, Albanians, Russians, Kurds, Iranians, Iraqis and in general to all those who took part in the collective protest of 23rd April in the torture jails. We owe it to all those who fought with passion for liberty and dignity. We will always be in debt...

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*About the Greek
prison revolts of 2007*



Introduction

This is produced in the spirit of the revolt of Malandrino.

On the 23rd April 2007 an intense period of rebellion started in Malandrino prison of the Greek State, a rage sparked by the beating of anarchist Giannis Dimitrakis by guards. Malandrino is a prison where prisoners spend long sentences in extremely hard and humiliating conditions. On the 24 of April, the riot had spread to all the modules of that prison, while prisoners in Patras took control of the units there. Korydallos in Athens succumbed to the riot also on this day, whilst hunger strikes and other protests also began in the prisons of Trikala, Larissa, Nafplio, Kerkira and Komotini.

The revolt quickly spread to all parts of the prison estate all over Greece, with the rebels receiving many acts of love and solidarity from those ‘outside’ the cell walls, and even abroad in other countries.

This small brochure accompanies the DVD ‘Prison World’ and gives a brief background, texts, chronology of the revolt and also letters from anarchist prisoners Giannis Dimitrakis and Nikos Koudardas.

Our anarchist libertarian perspective of a world of freedom and egalitarianism demands nothing less than the total overturning of the present mainstream social vision of a ‘perfect’ world of endless consumerism and exploitation.

It demands nothing less than the complete destruction of the present democratic-capitalist consumer society which produces ‘crime’ and ‘disorder’ alike.

The prisons and the police are the main tools of repression State and Capital uses to enforce the exploitation of wage slavery and competition. Our world does not require prisons, hierarchy or capitalism, this trilogy will only produce more instability, oppression and misery – we can build a future without exploitation and brutality, with co-operation, solidarity and mutual aid.

All the prisoners should come out onto the streets to see this prison society burn.

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Cover photographs from the top clockwise: Cars burn outside Athens police station in solidarity action with prisoners. Malandrino prison detainees burn sheets in protest, the roof-top occupation of Malandrino.

The detainee Timo Berendt, arrested in March for the manufacture and use of explosive materials is released on bail.

4th July

Some spray cans explode in a cash point in Cyprus. The communiqué is signed by “the sect of communists” in solidarity with Dimitrakis and against capitalism.

5th July

A group of people attack with stones, baseball bats and paint the National Bank in Athens (the same bank Dimitrakis was arrested for robbing). Two policemen and a security guard are helpless to stop the attack. At the same time another group of people attack with stones and molotovs the Cyprus Bank, the Trade Bank and the Piraeus Bank.

6th July

The trial against Dimitrakis begins.

10th July

The National Bank in Iraklios (Crete) is attacked in the night with baseball bats and paint. The attackers write slogans in solidarity with Dimitrakis.

15th July

About 20 people throw molotovs at the Ministry of Economy in Athens and smash its windows. The police declares the action is linked to Dimitrakis’ trial.

17th July

Dimitrakis’ trial ends. The sentence is 25 years. The convictions are: robbery, 3 attempted murders and illegal weapons possession.

18th July

Nikos Kourardas is released 2 weeks before the end of his preventive detention. He’ll have to sign at the police station twice a week.

12th August

The 235 detainees in Giannina prison (equipped to host a maximum of 80 people) rise up, climb on the roof and shout slogans. Some mass media say five detainees have taken a guard hostage.

13th August

Riot police break into Giannina prison and force the detainees to go back to their cells.

31st August

Around 7pm a detainee on his way back to the prison after a day release gets searched as he’s believed to have taken part in April’s revolt. He refuses to be

29th April

There's a demo outside Malandrino prison in solidarity with the detainees. Some of the demonstrators manage to communicate with some detainees.

30th April

Two people on a motobike throw a hand grenade and shoot with a automatic firearm outside the police station of Nova Ionia in Athens. The firearm is thought to be an MP5 stolen a week before from one of the Ministries. The action will be claimed by the group Revolutionary Struggle in solidarity with the detainees.

1st May

Two gas tanks explode underneath a car belonging to a private surveillance company in Cavala. The company claims the damages have cost them 12.000 Euro. Again, the action is claimed to be as an action in solidarity with the detainees.

9th May

A debate takes place about the protection of personal data in the workplace, in the building of the Journalists' Union. One of the participants is Polyzogopoulos, ex-president of the GSEE union. As it starts a group of anarchists break in holding a banner in solidarity with Nikos Kourdardas (in prison for having allegedly attacked Polyzogopoulos). They throw flyers highlighting the disgusting behaviour of this unionist that has led to the arrest of two proletarians. The debate is cancelled.

10th June

A bomb explodes in a construction site of a new prison management centre in Nigrita. The damages are so serious that the opening of the building, first scheduled for August, has to be postponed. The bomb is similar to the one used in another anarchist action against a Revenue Agency in Athens.

19th June

In solidarity with Dimitrakis a group of people attack with baseball bats and molotovs the National Bank, the Pireaus Bank and the Eurobank. They also set on fire a car belonging to the Ministry of Trade.

22nd June

A Greek newspaper receives the message: "We have vandalised cash points of the Probank, the Pireaus Bank and the 12th Revenue Agency in Athens, in solidarity with the comrade Dimitrakis. We will keep hitting in any corner of the city where the exploited are under attack by Polidoros' army (Polidoros is the Minister of Public Order).

3rd July

The Internal Enemy

The Greek obsession with 'domestic terror' reached its peak in the summer of 2002 when a bomb exploded in the hands of Savvas Xiros, member of the "November 17th" group¹. Since the beginning the main objective has been the total defeat of the "internal enemy" - in other words, the suppression of all those individuals who collectively or individually oppose the democratic regime.

The Greek state – following the example of other Western states – showed scant regard for the law when fighting insurrectionists, notable even by Greek standards. The way had been prepared in 2001 by the press and television by leaking sensational stories at the request of police and the anti-terrorism department. Once again, journalists showed they are just asslickers.

What the authorities were waiting for was an excuse, and they got that on 29th June 2002 when the bomb exploded in Savvas' hands. Since then, the floodgates have opened: Savvas gets arrested and directly imprisoned, without being allowed to see anyone for days. He is forced to take psychoactive drugs with the aim of extorting as much information as possible from him. At the same time, the other people arrested are subjected to "special treatments" like isolation, psychological terrorism and are used as guinea pigs for new types of interrogation.

They then passed the baton to the mass media preachers who tried to subtract ideology and sense from the event, as well as to distort the whole story away from the social struggle of urban resistance and armed organisations. A series of arrests culminate with the internment of some alleged members of the Revolutionary Organisation "November 17th" and of E.L.A. (Revolutionary Popular Struggle) in the underground high security cells, or "white cells".

In view of the Olympiads democracy took its next step with the clear objective of attacking radical political groups, and in particular the anarchist and anti-authoritarian scenes. The mass media helped out by spreading a message of fear, at the same time feeding the people's request for security and the necessity of the State to mediate for it.

At a theoretical level, all this can be summarised in the slogan "The ones who resist are repressed". It is in this direction that the ideological attacks against anarchists have moved. At a practical level, the repression takes the form of

¹ This date has a very special significance in Greek history; during the years of the dictatorship a massive demonstration of popular rejection of the military junta started on 14th November 1973 and ended in bloodshed in the early morning of 17th November. This date is now an official school holiday in Greece, celebrating the uprising. Massive demonstrations take place and almost every year riots occur.

immediate arrests, operations against migrants, transfers and dislocations of inmates, attacks against solidarity actions, etc... Anarchist and anti-authoritarian's actions get defamed, discredited, deprived of their reasoning in an attempt which has two objectives: to prepare the way for repressive attacks and to distance and isolate the anarchist and anti-authoritarian scene from other groups in struggle, like the students and migrants.

After "provocateurs", "usual unknown", "friends of terrorism" and others, a new term is adopted to describe anarchists: KouKouloforos (the hooded, the covered-face ones). Since the resistance and the civil war times this word has been associated with Nazi collaborators and anti-terrorist police departments (such as the FIT). Nowadays for those who believe in what the media say, the koukouloforos could be collaborators, enemies of mobilisations, spies...the attack is on the theories, principles, values and practices adopted by the anarchists.

About Nikos Koudardas

On 31st January 2006 Christos Polyzogopoulos - head of the General Confederation of Greek Labour (GSEE) and member of PASOK (Socialist Party, and former ruling party) - and a colleague got attacked and beaten by a group of alleged anarchists.

A few days later Nikos Koudardas is among the ones who get arrested for the attack. He gets taken to the police station after a simple document check. His house gets searched without warrant, and the police confiscate a baseball bat and some anarchist literature. At the station Nikos gets told that his fingerprints have been found on Polyzogopoulos's car.

Polyzogopoulos himself arrives later and recognises Nikos from a photograph taken in 1998 as one of the attackers. Eventually Nikos is charged with attempted manslaughter, robbery, weapon possession and damage to honourable persons. He has always denied taking part in the attack, claiming that he was elsewhere at the time. In June 2009 Nikos had been released from the jail for some time and for his own reasons, he admitted participation in the political killing of an armed state guard, H. Amanatidis. Nikos chose to enter the prison to continue his struggle.

Extracts from a letter by Nikos

Another state murder. On Tuesday 27th February 2007 Nicolaos Sipsas, an inmate awaiting trial, staged a protest because the guards didn't allow him to go to the infirmary - a small room of 4x2 metres that, according to the prison bosses, should satisfy the needs of 500 inmates! To us it looks more like an antiquated ambulance.

The practice quickly spreads all over Europe and in America. The Russian revolutionaries adopt it, as do Spanish workers after the war. In the 60's robbery is practised as a form of urban resistance, as an expression of the anti-capitalist struggle born in the heart of the cities. It becomes a common practice for organisations like the RAF, Action Direct, Red Brigades, 17th November, Tupamaros and many more.

Chronology of events 2007

23rd April

A large number of detainees in Malandrino prison start a protest, climbing on the roofs and starting fires. The spark that has caused the protest is the beating of the anarchist detainee Giannis Dimitrakis and the brutal response by the guards to the protests of his comrades in the cell.

By 10pm, about 150 people have gathered outside the Greek president's house, stopping the traffic and shouting slogans in solidarity with the detainees.

24th April

Around 1.30pm about 150 people on motorbikes have a demo outside Diavata prison, near Salonico. Both the demonstrators and the detainees shout slogans, and the detainees throw burning blankets outside the building.

At least another 11 prisons rise up throughout the country.

There is another demo outside Volos prison.

25th April

Riot police smash their way in several prisons. About 250 detainees are still on the roof of Malandrino prison, together with another 50 in Corfu and Alicarnassus.

There are solidarity demos outside a few prisons.

In Athens about 50 people attack two Ministries with stones and paint – the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Public Order.

26th April

About 250 detainees spend the night on the roof of Malandrino prison, in the rain and in the cold. They haven't had access to food or water for 3 days. Riot police are inside and also surround the building.

In Koridallos prison the anarchist prisoners Nikos Kourdardas and Vasilis Stergiou are put in solitary because they're believed to have instigated the protests.

Solidarity demonstrations happen across the whole country. In Athens a group of anarchists attack the riot police HQ with stones and molotovs. In Exarchia, another area of Athens, about 50 people attack the local police station. Part of the building is set on fire, along with cars and motorbikes.

In the evening, after making a deal with the Minister of Justice, Malandrino detainees go back to their cells.

the banks have always constituted succulent prey for their high concentration of money due to clients' deposits. Precisely for this reason, because of the bank being a "goose that lays golden eggs" with all its hidden riches, it's always been a primary objective of robbers, especially with the inviting aspect of its buildings.

When capitalism started its fearless growth, constantly fed by the sweat of workers, every single bank foundation, whether private or state-owned, began to expand, planting branches in every corner of the country. They then expanded in other countries too, and acquired a multinational character. While these developments were happening, poverty and despair kept growing in the majority of the population till the point where bank robbery has now become epidemic. (...)

Bank robbery, therefore, can be considered as a legitimate action (...). As an action it has two purposes: it ensures the provision of the economic security necessary for one's survival and it is also a form of fundraising for the struggle undertaken by some revolutionary groups against the lords of society. It is an action that doesn't harm the individual or society (as a group of citizens) as its only target is an economic colossus which won't be deeply affected by that loss of money. No-one but the bank itself will be affected.

A brief history of bank robbery in the anarchist tradition

At the end of the 20th century a new way of looking at the practice of robbery was born in France. During this time France was full of robberies and assassinations perpetuated by individualists like Ravachol or Emile Henry. A similar form of action was undertaken by the illegalists, who chose to hit the bourgeois where it hurt. Banks, jewels, works of art: these became the objectives.

Most illegalists are inspired by the individualist theories of Max Stirner. Individualist anarchists reject paid work and find a way of expressing their class hatred by re-appropriating the money of the middle classes. The most famous illegalists are Marius Jacob and the Bonnot gang. In 1900 Jacob and his comrades formed a group of expert robbers. Their headquarters were in Paris, but their actions took place all over France, Belgium and Italy.

In Jacob's words: "*Robbery is our payoff, the re-appropriation of objects. Instead of shutting myself up in a factory, which is like a prison; instead of begging for my rights; I have chosen to rise up and fight face to face against my enemies, going to war against the rich, attacking their properties. If I have chosen the practice of robbery it isn't for my personal gain. It's a matter of principle, of justice. I have chosen to maintain my freedom, my independence, my dignity as a person, instead of allowing my boss to gain*".

After torments, supplications, and after the change of heart of guards who had finally realised his serious condition, he managed to get to the infirmary in a semi-conscious state. After all the delay and the confrontations, another surprise awaited him: the doctor wasn't there, nor was the pathologist on shift. Let's not talk about the cardiologist, who is evidently considered a luxury for detainees. The same goes for other specialised doctors, like psychiatrists, microbiologists, otolaryngologists, and dentists, whose presence should be obligatory.

But the regime pretends not to hear. "He would be alive if there had been a cardiologist, or at least the pathologist who had already solved Nikos' problem once" - we, the inmates, will shout. "Oh, come on, he's had an heart attack" - the heads of the prison will say, denying any responsibility and eager to make this homicide pass by in silence.

There'll be a line in the press, for statistical reasons only. However, their version of events only convinces five or six detainees out of a hundred in the G-wing. These are the people that obey the guards, that will go and get their meals under the vigilant eyes of the head of the guards. We, the remaining 85 detainees, make clear our hatred for these bastards. We persist in remaining human and carry on refusing meals as a demonstration of solidarity for our comrade, a small tribute, but a dignified one. A spontaneous decision we all took to give an immediate response to the irresponsible people responsible for Nikos Sipsas' unjust death. (...)

The first aim of the hunger strike was an honest explanation of the circumstances of our comrade's death, leaving aside the declarations of the authorities and their parrots. We asked, we investigated, we contacted friends of the unlucky Sipsas' and spoke to witnesses, and we understood how things really happened in this state homicide. Only the pathologist's assistant works at the jail infirmary, not the pathologist himself. The latter came here only every couple of weeks rather than every day. The reason? Because he dared to declare in a TV interview that in this jail half of the detainees sleep on the floor and that it's the only jail where detainees are systematically beaten. For that he was punished with a partial suspension from his job. Evidently, the system punishes any who question it.

So, the doctor wasn't present at the time. We ask the question: is a simple nurse able to deal with a cardiac arrest? Obviously not. So why was Nikos not taken to the hospital? Because, very simply, he wasn't "the good boy" that they wanted him to be. He simply asked to be taken to the hospital, but instead maybe someone gently whispered to him that he was taking too long to die. The fact they didn't believe he was really having a cardiac arrest is a flimsy excuse, as he had had a similar episode in the past. Why, when they realised the situation was serious and they finally decided to "believe him", did they tell him to go to his cell and get changed, because you can't go to hospital in pyjamas?

When he went back to his cell he breathed his last breath. He was 52. He was never given the chance to have a trial and fight for his freedom.

Comrades, in my 13 months of detention in the Greek cremators I have witnessed several arbitrary decisions. But my 3 months in Nafplios jail have been on a completely different level. With this letter and in the occasion of my comrade's death I'll try to make you see what happens behind the bars, and confirm the infamy of this jail.

To begin with, the conditions of the buildings are appalling. Concrete everywhere, the yard is 15x15 metres, the walls are 20 metres high, so you can only see a bit of sky and some sun in the early morning. We have the bare minimum amount of time outside. For 19 hours we stay locked in our CCTVed cells, with controls and security. In the G wing where I am there are four cells, where at a squeeze 60 people would fit yet there are 110 people in there. In the fourth cell – where I am – there are between 25 and 30 of us, where 15 would already be too many. We each have 2.5 square metres, and according to the authorities we should be happy because in the A and B wings detainees only have 1.5 square metres each! There, there are cells for which the expression “store of souls” doesn't adequately describe the situation. Three people sleep on the bed, other three on the floor, and their feet touch the toilet. (...)

One detainee can rarely walk without his shoulder meeting someone else's shoulder; this obviously causes many rows. The main cause of tensions is, however, the telephone. Obviously the directors pretend they can't see anything – this situation plays their game because it sets the detainees one against the other and creates conflict. There's only one telephone booth for every 40 detainees. Mobile phones are out of the question. There isn't any type of recreational activity: no gym, no backgammon, no pool table, nothing; none of the things they have in other prisons.

There's a total censorship of any paper material and all books are forbidden. The judiciary commission which in theory defends the detainees' rights probably doesn't know about the censorship details or is busier dealing with the glass partition. And that's not all. We only have hot water in the evening, and only if you are at the front of the queue. 20 minutes of hot water for the needs of 25-30 people. The heads' response is to blame the Ministry. It might even be the case, but do we have to ask the Minister of Justice to switch the boiler on?

The situation is explosive. There are no cookers for the detainees. If one misses the meals for any reason, they starve all day. On Sunday evening we all starve because for some unknown reason we have no dinner. We are not allowed to get food from our visitors. I have to admit, the quality of the food is better compared with other prisons, but how hungry can you be when everything else sucks? I'm talking about small things that, one after the other, make our life difficult. And it's very basic needs I'm talking about. The things you should take for granted in a prison. All these things should have been talked about at the meeting between the detainees' committee and the prison's governors, that took

place after we went on hunger strike. However, there wasn't time because we had to talk about even more basic things: the lack of doctors, the inhuman behaviour of the guards, the beatings.
(...)

Comrades, the collective refusal of food in Nafplios jail isn't a flash in the pan. It is the continuation of actions that have been taking place over the last year in several prisons. Prisons are a boiling pot. (...) To end, I want to say that for me fighting for detainees' rights until the last prison is destroyed has a deep political sense as this is precisely the beginning of freedom. (...)

Nikos Kourdardas from Nafplios prison, March 2007

About Giannis Dimitrakis

On Monday 16th January 2006 Giannis Dimitrakis took part in a bank robbery at the National Bank in Athens city centre. He and his comrade got chased by some of the bank security guards. One of the guards opened fire, injuring one of the fugitives. The noise and confusion alerted the police who arrive and start shooting indiscriminately into the crowd to stop the remaining two fugitives. Giannis gets seriously injured and is sent to hospital, where he gets interrogated.

In the following days several friends and comrades of Giannis' get interrogated and three are arrested. While Giannis admits his involvement in the bank robbery, he also gets charged with taking part in another six - all robberies that both the mass media and the police attribute to anarchist groups. Moreover, he also gets charged with attempter murder for something that happened in one of those six bank robberies.

Giannis himself explains in one of his letters the reason for his choice of target: “the level of awareness that my thinking and my theories give me allow me to see clearly that modern society is based on violence, oppression and exploitation. It's a system that sacrifices human lives in the name of profit. Obviously, banks are one of the major accomplices of this situation. Banks are legalised usurers and are mainly responsible for the exploitation of people.”

Extracts from a letter by Giannis

(...) To the vexing and insistent questions “Slave or free? Dead or alive?” I have decided to respond loudly and with all my soul: free and alive. Bank robbery has been the only tool I've been able to identify as rebellious, a useful tool, an opportunity to transform my thoughts into action. This practice has been adopted by a wide variety of people since the beginning of the 20th century, as