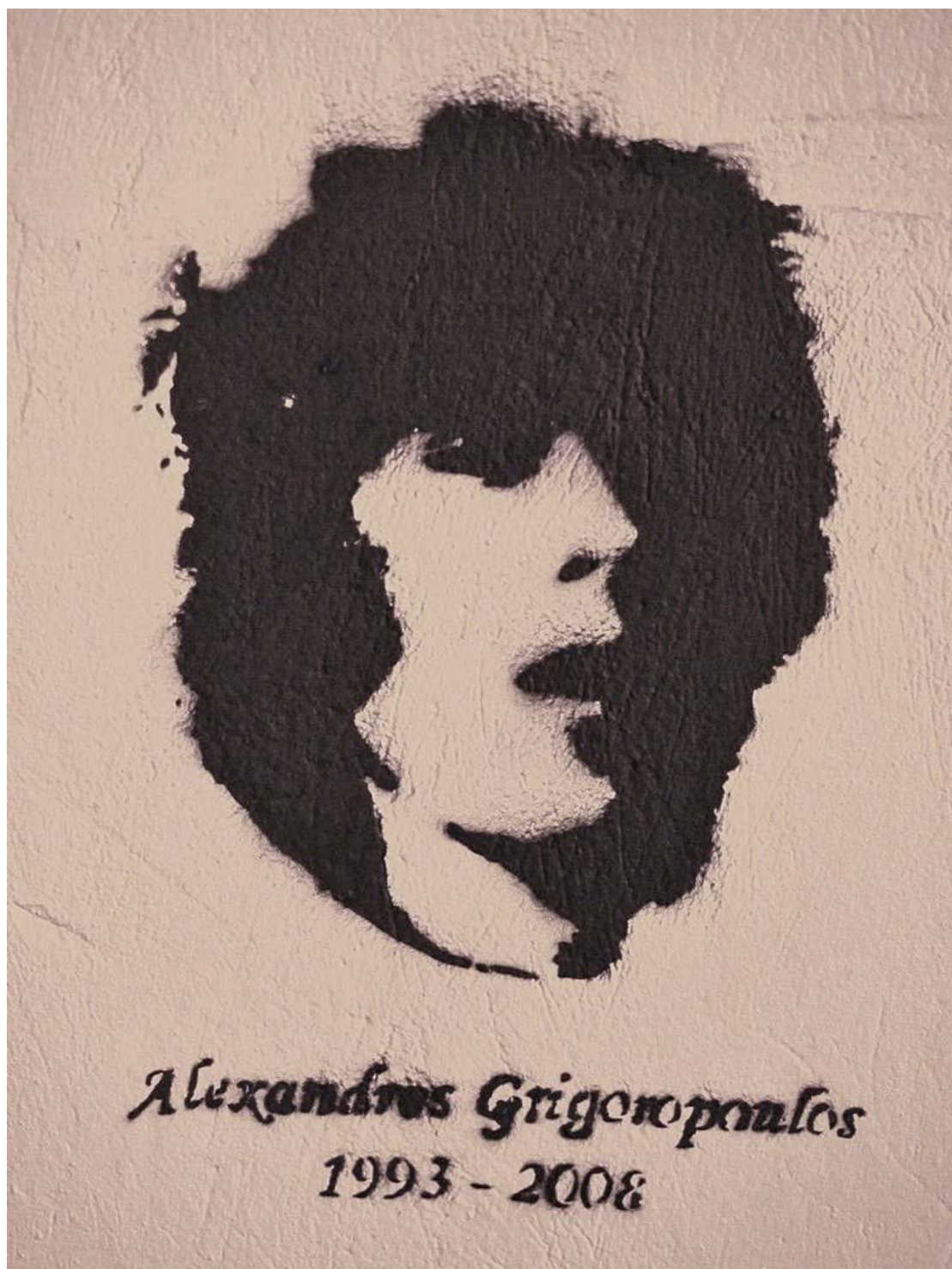


REQUIEM FOR A JOURNEY OF NO RETURN



In the following pages anarchist prisoner Nikos Romanos gives his account of what preceded the assassination of Alexandros Grigoropoulos on December 6th 2008.

Requiem for a Journey of No Return

Today, I will begin to speak about what should be imprinted as an authentic testimony of the soul to revolutionary memory. My own soul's testimony concerning an incident which became the detonator for the intensification of the armed assault on the winter palaces of Power; an incident which contributed decisively to create a point of no return, for those who armed themselves and packed their suitcases with dreams and hopes for a world of freedom. I too packed such a suitcase with my hatred, along with a pair of clothes and some keepsakes, and left my home permanently [*in April 2010*] one day before the police came in looking for me, to handcuff me and take me to court for a testimony in the cops-murderers trial. I burned the bridges of my past life, and joined the ranks of clandestine anarchist struggle. I was then sixteen years old, but I was fully aware of my actions, and although I had a much higher moral stature than all these ridiculous weaklings who sat in that courtroom, I knew that the moment to say everything that needed to be said had not yet arrived, as it was neither the right time, nor was I really consciously ready to lift such a historical weight. That's why I preferred to stay silent and devote myself to the war against Power, the same war in which, seven years later, I find myself held captive, yet holding the same combative position. I am now lifting this historical weight, which I temporarily avoided but never abnegated dealing with.

That trial [*of the first instance*] which I refused to attend but also their appeal's trial which will follow attempt to put an end – in the form of institutional ratification – to an aspect of subversive history, an aspect that shamed democracy as it revealed the scent of death that it is dragging behind it. This particular aspect – an integral part of a history that will continue to exist as long as the oppressed will rise up against their oppressors – unfolded in the evening of December 6th 2008 at the intersection of Messolonghiou and Tzavela St. in Exarchia.

What I am about to say are in no way said to facilitate the judicial mechanisms to issue a future fair verdict. I believe in neither the laws, nor the courts, nor the prisons emerging threateningly to discipline those who deviate from the legal order, burying them alive between cement and bars.

I have the courage to believe in the strength of free humans, in the possibility of their self-determination in a world of universal subordination, in the prospect of anarchist revolution and the practice of constant anarchist insurgency.

I will begin my narrative with a view to addressing history, standing worthily before it, contributing to the creation of an untainted legacy that won't stain the memory of our dead, and sending a guerilla signal to those who are interested in becoming actors that will shape its development accordingly. With constant struggle, with all means, with a passion for freedom and a hatred of those who maintain the new order of things, that's painted in the blood of those who resisted its omnipotence.

The swan song for my friendship with Alexandros begins...

Alexandros and I met in school, and started to spend a lot of time together as we lived relatively close to each other. He was a person who detested the respectabilities and hypocrisy prevailing in our school environment. He was always looking to find ways to break out of this condition, and that's how we hit it off. We came to know each other well playing truant, to escape from the routine of school boredom, going on endless walks to explore parts of the city that were unknown to us, having daily conversations and discussions about everything that puzzled us. As time passed, we continued to walk on paths of broadened pursuits and intense questioning of the world that surrounded us.

At around the age of 14, we noticed of anarchists for the first time; we enjoyed watching television footage of clashes between demonstrators and police; to our immature perceptions, which we had just begun to form, this seemed as a way of resisting the everyday injustice of social inequalities. Besides, for us, who were loitering in parks and squares all day, it was not so hard to dislike police – even instinctively, one might say. We had seen cops humiliate migrants in downtown Athens; we had witnessed how offensively cops behaved towards substance-dependent and homeless people. Of course, these are things that anyone can see by taking some strolls in central Athens. The contradiction we were experiencing, however, was when we saw cops bow down and lick the dust from the feet of the rich where we were residing [*in one of the wealthiest northern suburbs of Athens*]. It was then that we really understood how duplicitous maggots and cowardly the whole disgusting lot of them are.

So we took the decision to go together on a demonstration [*downtown*] to see up close everything we had been observing from afar, of which we had developed a keen interest. And that's what we did. I remember that the first march we had joined was that of 17th November [*annual demo commemorating the 1973 Athens Polytechnic uprising*] in 2007, where there had been clashes with cops, in which we too participated. Of course, we were very hesitant back then, simply following and imitating the steps of people who clashed with police. We

saw up close MAT anti-riot cops savagely beating people at random, felt the asphyxiation caused by tear gases, and for the first time witnessed police repression of demonstrations. Once the march was finished we went to Exarchia, where we sat until late evening discussing the events with an enthusiasm for what had just occurred; the kind of enthusiasm felt by all people when they begin to come into contact with the authentic side of life.

An important reference point for both of us was the antifascist demonstration that took place on February 2nd 2008. It was the day that the Golden Dawn had called a rally for Imia [*nationalist commemoration of the 1996 conflict between Greek and Turkish states over the Imia/Kardak islets in the Aegean Sea*], and anarchists had called for a counter-demonstration aiming to clash with the fascists.

We too were there and we saw the fascists come forth from behind the lines of MAT anti-riot squads to stab comrades; we witnessed how the pigs of police coordinated their incursions with the fascists. We saw comrades being stabbed, fascists being crushed by comrades with axes and heavy wooden sticks. And, lest we forget, those who were on the fascist frontline are now members of the Greek parliament – I am referring to Elias Panagiotaros, Yannis Lagos and Elias Kasidiaris, before they disowned their past and invoked legality and democracy.

Once the clash with fascists and cops was finished, we barricaded ourselves inside the Rectorate [*of Athens University in Propylaea, Panepistimiou Street, Athens*] and waited there until late evening; then we all left the building together in a demonstration. That demo was attacked by cops as soon as it hit the street, and there were detentions, arrests and injuries.

Ever since that day, we hung out in Exarchia almost on a daily basis and started to make contact with others who frequented the neighbourhood. We began to read anarchist zines and pamphlets, to check up on counter-information webpages, to frequent squats like the [*now-evicted*] Villa Amalias

squat and the Prapopoulou squat. At the same time, we took part in all demonstrations of that period concerning welfare reforms and in university students' protests against the known Framework Act [*for higher education*], solely motivated by the prospect of clashes and disturbances in the streets, which we joined more willingly and determinedly each time.

During the same period, along with some other school students, we created an anarchist collective by the name *anarchist attack of school students* and held some assemblies on the topic of schools and the role of education with regard to the social machine's functioning.

I also remember that, a few days before 17th November 2008, we had participated in an attack against the PASOK Youth, who had their offices in Exarchia at the time. The incident lasted quite a while because the members of PASP [*university student faction of PASOK party*] had hired a bunch of bouncers to protect them – just as they had done in previous years during 17th November marches, where their henchmen had in fact attacked anarchist blocs. So basically the confrontation was not with the PASOK Youth themselves but with the bouncers guarding their offices. In the end we managed to reach their offices, and those of them who didn't lock themselves inside in time got what was coming to them. As a result, a PASP student who was carrying the [*blood-stained national*] flag of the Polytechnic had a broken arm in all the pictures that adorned newspaper front pages the next day.

Another incident I retrieve from my memory is a solidarity gathering at Evelpidon courts [*in July 2008*] for the then-imprisoned anarchists [*Marios*] Tsourapas and [*Chrysostomos*] Kontorevythakis, who stood trial for an incendiary attack [*on a patrol vehicle*] at offices of the municipal police. Once the court session ended, the solidarians who had attended that hearing left on foot for Exarchia. At the height of Pedion tou Areos Park, a scuffle with two cops of the Z motorised unit broke out, and the police helmets that they left behind on their motorcycles were taken. During the scuffle, the cops had pulled

out their guns and fired several times not only into the air but also aiming at the crowd to compel us to run away.

Next frame in this narrative is that damned evening of December 6th. I was sitting with Alexandros and some other folks on the Messolonghiou pedestrian street, as we did almost on a daily basis.

After a while a comrade came to us and suggested we go to Charilaou Trikoupi Street and wait for a patrol car to pass by so we could throw some stones he had picked up. We did go there and waited while Alexandros stood further behind us. Shortly afterwards a patrol car passed by, with Korkoneas and Saraliotis inside.

I didn't know then that the fullness of time had come for all of us; it was the moment that would change everything. The hourglass of life was turned upside down the moment a stone hit the police car of Korkoneas. We went back and sat on the pedestrian street, with the rest of the folks, while Korkoneas and Saraliotis passed in the patrol car from Zoodochou Pigis Street to see who had attacked them; at that point, we threw some small objects at the patrol car; once they had glanced at us, they drove away, parked the patrol car next to the MAT anti-riot squad that guarded the offices of PASOK party, and returned to the intersection of Tzavela and Zoodochou Pigis St. on foot.

Once we saw the cops approaching, we got up to leave, as we thought that the MAT anti-riot squad would come with them, as is usually the case. At that moment the two cops began to swear at us, and that's when we noticed they had come on their own, without any supporting police force. So some of us moved towards them, and Alexandros, who had gone ahead, hurled some of the beer bottles we had been drinking from. After only a few seconds, Korkoneas pulled out his gun and concluded by means of bullets the specific confrontation which had been initiated just a little while ago.

A bullet in the heart of Alexandros to close the circle of the statist machine's omnipotence. A bloodstain on the Messolonghiou pedestrian street to open the circle of rebellion that wrecked the legal order and sowed chaos and anarchy in all cities throughout Greece.

Quite logically, the defence lawyers have tried and will try to claim it was a tough break, a ricocheted bullet, an isolated incident. From my perspective, as contradictory as it may sound, this serves my own desires as well – obviously on a judicial rather than a political level. I do not believe in the institution of incarceration, as I consider it to be one of the tools of horror, democratically administered in doses, which domination has in its arsenal to ensure smooth reproduction.

I believe in the revolutionary right to take the law into one's own hands and in everyone's effort to square accounts with their enemies on their own, away from the mediation of cops, judges, laws, prisons, the scientifically thought-out repression, the technocratic ugliness that stains the beauty of wild instincts and free will. For me, the cops-murderers consequently deserve a chaotic prospective probability that revenge will be taken for all the lost souls seeking their own violent deliverance. This is the only justness in my own value system.

Besides, we do not torture people like the contemporary authoritarian civilisation systematically does – the greatest monstrosity in the history of humankind, which has even managed to normalise death and put words and meanings at the service of its domination through the propaganda mechanisms of the always objective global information centres.

Because all of us, enemies of Power, may have come to terms with prison or even death as a potential eventuality, but we have never accepted death's existence as a news story in the constructed virtual reality with which we are being bombarded.

The most ridiculous part of it all is the fact that the propaganda mechanisms of domination attempt to portray murders committed by cops as isolated incidents caused by deranged personalities, as accidents that always occur due to negligence.

Police murders are neither isolated incidents, nor a Greek phenomenon. They are an extreme manifestation of the democratic imposition upon social margins, poor-devils, delinquents, insubordinates, migrants. Furthermore, police murders confirm that the liberatory war exists, whenever they target insurgents who arm themselves and fight domination with the flame of freedom burning in their hearts.

These killings are a logical consequence of cops' perceptions of their role, perceptions with which these individuals are indoctrinated to staff the repressive machines that shield the social machine's orderly functioning.

Police firearms do not go off with murderous intentions only in Greece; they murder 15-year-olds in Turkey because they participated in anti-government demonstrations, they murder 16-year-olds in Italy because they didn't pull over at a police traffic stop, they murder mothers and children in Palestine, they murder dozens of African Americans in the US on purely racist motives, they murder migrants in Sweden's suburbs, they murder youth in England's poorest hoods; they murder repeatedly and serially in all corners of the planet to impose social peace.

And if the examples I've brought are known to many, because they have been linked with small-scale and large-scale uprisings in response to statist murders, they do not cease to be a mere drop in the ocean compared to the storm of murderous crackdowns launched by security corps in defence of capitalist domination.

If we close our eyes and ears to the ceaseless flow of dominant propaganda, we'll be able to listen to the thousands of anonymous deaths in police stations,

terrestrial and maritime border areas, concentration camps, psychiatric institutions and prisons, war zones across the Middle East, and sweatshops that exterminate contemporary slaves. Anyone can hear the cries of people who are being tortured in police cells, who commit suicide in a confinement facility out of desperation, who are sunk by coast guard cops and drowned in the cold waters of the Mediterranean Sea, who are crippling their bodies over multinationals' production machines in third world countries, who are buried under rubble after blind aerial bombardments conducted by capitalist empires.

Consequently, all of the public discourse that currently revolves around the value of human life is, at its root, hypocritical and deeply offensive.

From our side, we have a very different approach to what is normally acceptable and how human life is valued, in relation to how these concepts are defined by dominant norms.

We don't think it's normally acceptable that people in Western societies eat their food with apathy in front of TV sets, watching warcrafts as they blindly bomb third world territories. Instead, we believe it's normally acceptable to transfer this war to the interior of urban centres, creating a political cost to the murderous interventions of dominant superpowers.

We don't think it's normally acceptable that civilians are bombed as a war strategy by states, so as to crush the morale of resisting peoples such as that of Palestine. Instead, we believe it's normally acceptable to strike by any means those junior or senior soldiers who are manning military operations against civilians.

We don't think it's normally acceptable that all this is presented as humanitarian interventions of dominant superpowers to ensure peace. We do not consider it normally acceptable that the entire civilised world is shedding crocodile tears for the dead in France, while the same states and their secret services – who are drowning entire populations in blood with their

interventions – are those that demonstrably trained, equipped and funded the monster that is Islamofascism, so as to serve their own interests; a monster which, as has repeatedly happened before, is autonomised and turns against its benefactors once it acquires power.

We do not consider it as normally acceptable that the vultures of financial lobbies plunder the natural resource wealth of destabilised countries in the name of peace and growth.

But we do consider it as normally acceptable to attack with all available means against bosses, statist officials, bankers, those who hold positions of political and economic power, those armed to protect the murderous social peace, representatives of the judiciary, executives of multinational companies, all persons and infrastructure that maintain and reproduce a system responsible for all the existent ugliness on this planet.

These are differences that can never be bridged but can only clash with each other to the bitter end; they constitute the evolution of insurgency and counterinsurgency, as well as the advanced dialectics being developed within each camp.

As for our side, this way creates a gap between domains where social control is organised and bloodied flowers of apathy bloom, a dangerous gap that aims to crush organised oppression and the Power's violence, the unpredictable factor, the statistical error on the diagrams of technocrats, the uninvited guest in the form of the internal enemy that organises and arms itself to strike the enemies of freedom.

This is the lasting anarchist insurgency, and its philosophy infects the authoritarian fabric, spreading anarchy in the metropolises of capitalism. And it is clear that it neither capitulates, nor retreats, but is only redeployed to attack again and again. Because *neck or nothing* is not an innocuous phrase painted on a wall, but the meaning that encapsulates the lives of those comrades, in these

times and other eras, who fell in combat with the enemy. This is why constant anarchist insurgency will continue to besiege domination, until the last authoritarian is hanged by the guts of the last bureaucrat.

So we're back to the point where combative minorities overturn the mass production of deterministic conclusions, where everything is possible, where unannounced intrusions into the territory occupied by Power afflict its military and political supremacy.

Because it's not enough to talk about anarchy if one is not ensuring its survival through deeds against the state, capital, society and their civilisation; because anarchy will always be a war without limits against the odds that are dictated by "experts".

For me, this has always been the issue at stake in the conflict; this was, is and will be the only solid reference source for analysing history.

Alexandros is now an integral part of this history; I cannot tell what he would've become if things had gone differently; besides, "what if" is nothing but an inner demon of the wounded. But I can speak for what Alexandros was until he fell dead by the bullets of that cop. In his short but adventurous life, he lived authentically; he was a rebellious youth, fascinated with the idea of anarchy, like those who nowadays occupy the city's narrow streets, launch Molotov cocktails at cops, and torch patrol cars of the police; he was insubordinate and stubborn; a sincere person with a kind soul and selfless motives in whatever he did. He was a person who lived his passions and frustrations with intensity.

He loved and was loved by many comrades, and will always be a reference point for many people, most of whom are now held captive in the prisons of democracy. And he may no longer be with us, but I know that he continues to plan small-scale and large-scale rebellions with our own dead, Mauricio [*Morales*], Carlo [*Giuliani*], Sebastián [*Overluij*], Michalis [*Kaltezas*], Lambros

[*Foundas*], Christos [*Tsoutsouvis*] and dozens of other wonderful people who departed leaving their dreams unfulfilled.

To the question that may reasonably be asked – why is all this needed to be said right now – the answer is simple.

In today's environment, where the velocity of historical time has derailed itself, where events are easily disconnected from the circumstances that gave birth to them, where reality is altered by the distorting lenses of publicists of every stripe, where everyday life is shaped according to the image that falls from the digital world on people's heads, it's a necessity that we keep revolutionary memory alive, that we make all its aspects known, without abandoning any of it to oblivion, which can only help its distortion.

As new circles of radical experiences are opened, there's no better way to reinitiate anarchist insurgency than connect it with its rekindling point. Because it is a common assumption that a part of the generation of anarchists, with their small and large disagreements, who armed themselves after the December 2008 rebellion, and are now locked in the cells of Greek prisons, had as starting points the nights when rebels were behind barricades and anarchy breathed life between the damaged symbols of Power.

As our own subversive experiences are moved away from the scope of our everyday personal events in the routine of our living captivity, we attempt to create a connection point and, simultaneously, a starting point of a new journey. A point of connection with our historical and political origins, a new starting place where rebels will encounter one another, and will not occasionally take to the streets, but rather contribute to the creation of an informal platform of coordination and action within anarchy; where strategy calls for the

permanency of rage, where revolutionary dialectics call for a wholehearted commitment to liberatory struggle.

Because Black December is not a staged repetition of previous insurrectional events, but rather a circle of struggle that connects the past with the present, in search of a future where our everyday life will be inundated with acts of attack and rebellion against Power.

Because, although our bodies are incarcerated between walls and bars, our souls are found in every part of the planet where flags of resistance are raised for a world of freedom. Because our hearts stubbornly continue to beat to the rhythm of wild freedom, next to the comrades of the Anarchist Insurgent Movement in Brazil, who, in their turn, have called for a Black December after setting fire to bank branches, next to the FAI cells and guerilla groups of comrades who go on the offensive, next to freedom fighters who combat Islamofascists in the territory of Rojava, next to anarchist comrades who self-denyingly risk their lives to help in the reconstruction of Kobani, next to rioters in Great Britain whose rage manifests itself violently, breaking the suffocating social control, next to anarchists in Spain hit by anti-anarchist operations of the Spanish state, in the streets of Chile, where rebels clash with cops and blow up police stations, in the squares of Turkey, where our comrades have paid with their lives for the conflict with the state-mafia of Erdoğan, next to comrades in Belgium who lit fires of destruction in the streets of Brussels. Despite all kilometric distances our struggle is common, and we share the same joy and the same pains with all these people that disseminate the poison of freedom into the authoritarian social fabric.

Somewhere here I bring this narrative to an end.

That was Alexandros and that's me. I do not regret anything and I still believe that the only dignified choice nowadays is that of polymorphous subversive struggle for anarchy. For all the reasons in the world, the confrontation between the world of freedom and the world of enslavement will continue to the bitter end.

Honour forever to all those killed in liberatory struggle!

For a Black December!

For the anarchist offensive against the world of Power!

Solidarity and strength to all anarchist prisoners!

Long live Anarchy!

N i k o s R o m a n o s

PS. To end the mockery of the last days about an amendment for educational furloughs, that was allegedly drafted by SYRIZA's gang of clowns to "benefit me personally", let me just clarify that for the three years I find myself in prison I have never set foot outside, nor does this seem likely to happen, since it's obvious that there is no way I will be granted leave from any prosecutors, whether their names are Nikopoulos or Perimeni. Therefore, SYRIZA's communication tricks are cunningly done, to cultivate positive impressions among those leftist voters their party is left with, while playing it safe, since the trial of the case that keeps me an indictée [*that is, awaiting sentencing; which is the authorities' "special justification" for rejecting all applications for educational leave*] will be over in a month's time anyway; but the prison administration has made all too clear to me that I will continuously receive negative decisions as long as I continue to release texts and "bother" from the inside – what I will continue to do, because I do not intend to make concessions on my stance.

NIKOS ROMANOS: *REQUIEM FOR A JOURNEY OF NO RETURN*

Originally published in Greek, November 30th 2015

gr-contrainfo.espiv.net/2015/11/30/nikos-romanos-requiem

Translated by Contra Info

en-contrainfo.espiv.net/2015/12/29/nikos-romanos-requiem