

AN IMAGE FROM THE FUTURE OF REVOLUTIONARY ECOLOGY



Photos by Xenos2008 and Iola I Dhimitis

Slopes of Parnitha Mountain; Burned building in Athens, 2008

greek insurrection and the eco-war to come

BY ANDI STASIS AGRIA

Throughout the history of Western culture, people have heralded Greece as a cradle of modern civilization. Today it is more like a deathbed—a turn of events much more worthy of heralding. Greece has not been a global power for millennia, but it is now a global symbol for what's to come in the society it's credited for birthing.

Larry Elliott, the economics editor for the UK's *Guardian*, recently called Greece “the first domino” of a crumbling European economy. Even right-wing Fox News commentator Glenn Beck took notice in his hilarious May 3, 2010 show, while waving around a copy of *We Are an Image from the Future*, a recent book from AK Press on the growing trend of insurrection in Greece.

The book highlights the events of December 2008, where what began as actions to avenge the police murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos, a 14-year-old in the Exarchia neighborhood of Athens, quickly grew into a rebellion with, arguably, all of modern society in its crosshairs. Actions primarily included attacks on police stations, banks and luxury shops, which is standard procedure for riots around the world. But several elements broke from the standard fare riot: the duration of the rebellion—nearly an entire month of consistent actions in cities across the country; the

level of coordination and organization through explicitly anarchistic assemblies; and the articulated rhetoric published in posters, blogs and graffiti.

The situation in Greece is relevant to radical ecologists and critics of civilization beyond the gut-level appreciation of burning cities. It's long past time to move from a fetishizing of Greek insurrection into the expression of practical solidarity. Below is a collection of writings, predominantly in the words of Greeks, which should be of interest to Earth First!.

Biodiversity Under Fire

The Greek landscape is also in the heart of the Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot. Of the 22,500 species of vascular plants in this hotspot, approximately 52 percent are found nowhere else in the world. The endemics are mainly concentrated on islands, peninsulas, rocky cliffs and mountain peaks. The Mediterranean region has 290 indigenous tree species (201 endemics) including the rare Cretan date palm (*Phoenix theophrasti*), which is only found in a tiny part of Crete and Turkey's Datca Peninsula; both areas are experiencing impacts from tourism development.

Killing Achelous River

Achelous, one of the biggest rivers in Greece and most important wilderness areas on the mainland, is facing ecologi-

cal disaster due to industrial cotton cultivation in Tessalia. The EU is funding the project to deviate the river, which would also completely destroy the mountain village of Mesochora. The local administration is promising money to the people to leave their houses, but there is a growing resistance to the plan. The river is also impacted by the Stratos and Katsiki hydroelectric dams. Anti-authoritarians have started a recent tradition of making summer action camps to build momentum in the region.

Pillage of Parnitha Mountain

Parnitha is a densely forested mountain range north of Athens, the highest on the peninsula of Attica. There are 46 springs, which flow continuously and form several streams and small ponds; there are also several caves and precipices, the most famous of which is *Panas*, named after the cloven-footed god Pan, and the nymphaeum there. About 1,000 species of plants can be found on the mountain, including crocus and tulips, and the mountain also provides a native habitat to its red deer, which were known in ancient times. Much of the mountain is designated as a national park and protected habitat for wildfowl.

Parnitha suffered extensive damage from a wildfire in June 2007, which burned 56 kilometers squared (21 miles squared) of land; the magnitude of the devastation was unforeseen. The fire

claimed 80 percent of the mountain's rare Greek fir and Aleppo pine forest and 150 endangered red deer, as well as birds and other rare animals. While investigations are still underway as to the fire's cause, one scenario suggests a transformer belonging to a major power line explosion some days prior to the fire. Another holds that this was one of the many arsons carried out by real estate developers that have claimed forested land all over Greece in recent years. In weeks following the fire, thousands protested in the city center over the state's response.

The following text is from a poster seen all over Exarchia in the Summer 2010; the poster also announced activist camps on the mountain:

"The holocaust of June 27, 2007, was nothing but a moment of the continuous destruction and pillage of Parnitha by an amplitude of criminal activities and plannings of political and economical authority on the mountain. Three years later, the casino is extending in the heart of the forest, the military camp and the antenna park occupy the tallest peaks of Parnitha, and buildings are rising among the remaining forests. Three years later, public forest areas are disposed at the old king palace and the installation of the industrial zone (*Technopolis Acropolis*) is moving forward, as well as the installation of wind generators in the heart of the forest. Three years later, innervations at the streams and the paths of the mountain alienate the natural place even more; plans of building refreshment shops at Agia Triada, the limitation of free access in the forest, more carfare and a total transformation of the mountain to a suburban commercial park. Three years later the fight against the pillage of the mountain continues."

...Whether it's green or gray, capitalism steals our lives! seen on the streets of Mitilini, Lesvos, Summer 2010. produced by a collective of Fabrica Yfanet, an abandoned factory squatted by anarchists in Thessaloniki

Greek RAGE

Resistance against genetic engineering (GE) in Greece is getting well-organized. An anti-GE network was established during a nationwide meeting held in Chania, Greece, in June 2008, adopting the full name *Kinos Topos: Libertarian Network in Resistance to Biotech and Technologies of Control*.

From their website: "The system is trying to impose an absolute world of industrial uniformity, sterile and without a trace of free life. The bilateral European Union (EU) agreements with African or Asian countries, TRIPS-type agreements, or the proposed new patent legislation in the EU,

only ensure that all of life will belong as a product for sale somewhere. Companies in the biotech lobby only want to ensure profits from sterile seeds, mutant varieties, and any form of animal species. Those who find a species of plant or animal can belong entirely to a company, will also find it reasonable and proper, in the not too distant future, for the human body—or at least certain parts and functions—to also belong to a company's laboratory or government agency. It is the same process which colonized the planet. But life has been here billions of years and will not be owned by anyone, not 'invented,' regardless of any predatory patenting that is legislated—wild and uncontrollable, 'dirty' and unpredictable, it will germinate even in their concentration camps."

A poster for a community event at Prapopoulou squat on the outskirts of Athens states: "Having biotechnology as a tool, as a spearhead of techno-science, capitalism sells solutions as a new commodity for the destruction that it causes on its own. We don't buy the fairy tale of green development."

Anti-Speciesist Action

Antispe's presence can be felt in Athens through the posters and stickers (again, particularly in Exarchia). The assembly that organizes under that banner has also organized public forums and has been represented at international animal rights conferences. But the existence of action speaks volumes beyond what any poster, sticker or forum could.

In the past two years alone, over 62,000 mink were released from captivity in Greece: About 10,000 mink were released from two farms

in Askio, claimed by Corvus Revengis, which also carried out a similar raid in neighboring areas in December 2008 and February 2009. Another 50,000 mink in Heliendendro, Kastoria on August 26, 2010 and the next day, 2,000 from a farm in Kaloneri, both claimed by Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Owners estimated the damage at a million euros (\$1.3 million).

From the August 2010 communiqué: "Liberating animals from cages is a way to put our ideas into practice. We oppose the oppression, exploitation and imprisonment that this civilization has created for any living being, regardless of species, race, gender or sexual preferences. In these desperate days we



"Green Development is BULLSHIT! What are you talking about?!" ...Whether it's green or gray, capitalism steals our lives! seen on the streets of Mitilini, Lesvos, Summer 2010. produced by a collective of Fabrica Yfanet, an abandoned factory squatted by anarchists in Thessaloniki



Photo courtesy, from left to right: irakola, Georgios Patsis, Mandlank

Left: Banks burned prolifically in Athens, Dec 2008; Center: Threatened Acheloos river ; Right: Graffiti demands "immediate release of all prisoners in the uprising"

still strive for freedom. Eat vegan on the barricades!
—ALF”

Reclaim the Commons

In March 2009, thousands of protestors rip down the wall around a vacant lot destined to become a parking garage, tear up the asphalt with jackhammers, plant trees and create a free park 50 meters away from the spot where Alexis was killed by the police. The park continues today as a liberated gathering place, with gardens, a playground and theater.

For 15 years the city had promised to make the lot a park, yet did nothing. In the meantime, the property owner retracted their offer to allow a park and began planning for construction valued at nine million euros (\$11.4 million). “You know what the best part is,” exclaims a visitor, “It’s seeing all the old people look at the park and how happy they are.”

“No,” interrupted a Greek anarchist, “The best thing is that we fucked the city out of nine million euros.”

Gold Mining and Guerilla War

Gold mining in Greece has seen large-scale ecosystem destruction and has caused ongoing health problems and deaths of local people and wildlife as a result of cyanide use, which has been outlawed in other European countries. Currently, Eldorado, a US-based parent company of Thracian Gold Mining, is planning to extract almost 30 tons of gold from Perama Hill. The project’s Environmental Impact Assessment is in process; by the end of 2011 gold extraction could start.

Gold mining in Greece has had a history of environmental objections, most notably against a Canada-based TVX Gold mine expansion proposal in the northern peninsula of Halkidiki. The project finally went bankrupt in the late '90s upon losing EU funding after legal battles and direct action—including the now-famous bombing attempt by Nikos Maziotis.

Maziotis was convicted of placing a bomb in the Ministry of Industry and Development in '97, in solidarity with the revolting villages around Strymonikos. The following is an excerpted translation of what Maziotis said to the court during trial in July 1999:

“The comrades up there in the villages ... had surpassed every limit. They had conflicts with the police three times.... They had set fire to police cars and riot-police vans, they had burnt machinery belonging to TVX, they had invaded the

mines of Olympiada and destroyed part of the installations.... In the nights, they were going out with guns, shooting in the air to frighten the policemen... then repression followed, especially in '97 when martial law was imposed in the area. The Chief of Police in Halkidiki gave an order according to which all gatherings and demonstrations were forbidden. They also sent special police units and police tanks, which came in the streets for the first time since 1980.... So, I thought, we must do something here, in Athens. It is not possible that the others are under repression and we here stay passive.

“THERE IS NO RELATION BETWEEN THIS ‘DEVELOPMENT’ AND ‘MODERNIZATION’ THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT AND THE COVERING OF POPULAR NEEDS. NO RELATION AT ALL. SO, I PLACED A BOMB.” —◆— **NIKOS MAZIOTIS**

“The Ministry of Industry and Development ... was one of the centers of this case. The struggle in Strymonikos was a struggle against ‘development,’ against ‘modernization’ and all this crap they keep saying. What is hidden behind all these expressions is the profits of multinationals, the profits of ‘our own’ Greek capitalists, the profits of states’ officials, of the Greek state, of the bureaucrats, of all those who take the money, of technical companies.... There is no relation between this ‘development’ and ‘modernization’ they are talking about and the covering of popular needs. No relation at all. So, I placed a bomb.”

Maziotis was arrested again in April this year along with five others in Athens, accused of further attacks on state and industry targets. In a related statement by the Revolutionary Struggle Three (which included Maziotis), the group took political responsibility for the alleged actions and refuted accusations of terrorism: “Anyone who looked closely at the trajectory of Revolutionary Struggle would understand the obsolescence of the assertions by the political establishment and its henchmen in the media about how our actions ‘constitute a threat to all of society.’ Which of our actions terrorized society or were directed against it? ... Did the attack against the multinational Shell—which for decades has plundered the natural resources of many countries, exploited entire peoples, and contributed to the destruction of the planet—terrorize the population?”

“This is the Spirit of Revolt”

Greek universities gained asylum status following the student revolts in '73 against the CIA-imposed dictatorship. In December '08 this site once again became a stronghold of resistance in the center of town. Two anarchists who were in the Polytechnic occupation, Pavlos and Irina, tell part of the story:

“The cops were defeated in the street, and the shops were destroyed—all the big shops and some smaller ones, but most of the little shops were not touched. The biggest computer shop in this street and one of the biggest in all of Greece was smashed open and burned completely. Many floors, a tall building, all burned. And it was burning slowly, so the arson was well done. I think it is not usable now, I think they will have to demolish it. This particular building was burned on purpose because this company was part of a consortium that wanted to build a technological park, like Silicon Valley, on a mountain near Athens, in a place where there is forest now...

“And every day we had food for everybody. Not only people living in the occupation. Poor people were coming there only to eat. To keep the restaurant stocked, groups of about thirty people formed up every day to go to supermarkets, fill-up shopping carts and take the food.... It was important because having this tool, this ability to feed ourselves, affected our living condition ... it was also like a womb of the world that we want to create inside the insurrection. But ... out of all these people who came together there were many who carried within them the culture of the enemy. So there were people who came to steal mobile phones and computers to sell for money.... That's why we put an end to this phenomenon after the second or third day, because some people were coming only to steal things. After that, anytime somebody wanted to enter the gates of the campus with looted items—there were people carrying boxes of stolen goods, computers and other things—we didn't allow them in unless they gave us the objects to throw in the fire. We told them *you have to choose: you or your computer.*”

Civilization is a Landfill

Statements by Transgressio Legis, an insurrectionary anarchist group in Athens, give further insight on actions in December: “We can't forget the attack on the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning. The entire building burned to cinders. This was in solidarity with the people of Lefkimi, a town in Corfu, who for the last year have been fighting hard against the police and government to keep a new garbage dump from being built in their area. In the riots [there] the cops had killed a woman, one of the protesters. So they burned this ministry building com-

pletely. After this action, which became very public because of all the announcements that appeared in the blogs, and Indymedia and other internet sites of the movement, the people of the town sent a letter of thanks for the solidarity actions, an official announcement of thanks....

“The war is continuing. Our generation has the opportunity to see incredible things happen to the societies of this planet. And it is up to us to see if the fascists and the leftists will capture the hopes of the people or if the anarchists—through our struggle—will offer society an escape route through the fires and cataclysm of liberation.”

All Dogs to the Barricades: A Tribute to Kanellos

A blogger, “rechelon on reddit,” posted this comment in response to a series of riot dog photos: “I live in Athens, in Exarchia and this dog is very famous and everybody feeds and loves this animal. But his name is Louk, from *Loukanikos*, a word that means sausage, because he used to eat sausages all the time. He lives on the street, he has no master, and he, along with 4-5 other dogs, comes to every demonstration here in Athens. You will find him every day in Mesollogiou Street, where Alexandros Grigoropoulos was shot by the police.

Kanellos was another dog that used to act the same, but he died two years ago and now he is buried by comrades inside the Polytechnic University in Athens, where the uprising against dictatorship took place in 1973. The members of Indymedia Athens used to feed him. Also when Kanellos was caught by the dog-catcher four years ago, a demo of 400 people took place and we released him from the dog catcher! You can find his grave inside the university. Kanello RIP!

These dogs live in Exarchia and they don't belong to nobody. We call them ‘the dogs of the movement’ and there are many of them, such as Roza, Dick, Ribo, Petros, Loucy.... It's funny, but they are our comrades, we protect and feed them and they protect us as well.”

Excerpts not otherwise noted were taken from We Are an Image from the Future, AK Press 2010. Posters were collected by the author during a recent trip to Greece. Andi Stasis Agria is a Free Radio DJ, contributing editor of the Earth First! Journal and a Greco-gringo who dreams of escaping to the hills of Perivolakia and bathing in Kalamata olive oil. A translation of the EF! Primer was also produced and is available on Athens Indymedia and the EF! Newswire for all the Greco-phones out there.



Riot dog photos by Aris Messinis, Louisa Gouliamaki, Nikolas Giakoumidis, Yiorgos Karahalis