

Immigration: An opportunity for the capital?

The example of Greece and the recent migrant crisis.

**- Who are the immigrants? Mixed migration motives and migrant heterogeneity.
What are the reasons of immigration?**

There has been a large number of immigrant workers settled for decades in Greece. Also, over the last four years Greece constitutes a transit country for many immigrants. They represent a structural element of the demographic composition and it is very interesting for us to explore the composition of this labor force, to present the older and the recent state policies concerning the migrant issue, as well as to discuss the class struggles which address them.

From the spring of 2015 until the spring of 2016 (March) when the agreement between the EU and Turkey was reached, 1.000.000 refugees and immigrants moved to EU via Greece. Syriza (Coalition of “Radical” Left) government, with an unprecedented antiracist solidarity campaign (at least until the agreement with Turkey), managed to present these flows as a “refugee crisis”.

On the one hand, there is the immigrants’ perspective. A big part of immigrants of Syria, legally recognized as refugees who have already fled to Turkey, took advantage of the Greek and the European law and sought a better prospect in Europe.

On the other hand, behind state’s charity management of the “refugee crisis” there are high stakes for capital. The local labour class feels relieved not to be in the position of the refugees and applauds the government for its social, compassionate attitude disregarding the fact that the whole country is transformed into an endless hot-spot land for the entire labour class, thanks to the memoranda.

There is, also, a common belief that the foreign future proletarians cannot expect anything much better than the state’s will to “launch” them into the aging European job market so that they help it be restructured through lower wages. Therefore, the immigrant issue (among others) was found on the focus of the Greek political scene, but in the wrong way and mainly according to the terms of the dominant class.

Syriza’s rank-n’-file, the extra-parliamentary left and the majority of the antiauthoritarian milieu demanded the free movement of immigrants without, however,

highlighting the fact that the immigrants/refugees are predestined to increase through their poorly paid work capital's profits.

The immigrants' profile

The '90s constitute a benchmark for the mass immigration to Greece. With the exception of Pakistani, who started arriving into the country in the early '70s, that decade was characterized by a massive influx of immigrants from Albania, exceeding the 50% of the foreign population of Greece. After 1995 there were Bulgarians, Romanians and women from Russia, Georgia, Ukraine and Bangladesh, Indians, Egyptians, Iranians. In 1986 both legal and illegal immigrants were 90.000, whereas in 1998 their number reached 1.000.000.

The causes of the increased immigrant mobility to the EU countries were violent political struggles and economic crises in the former state capitalist countries combined with poor wages, high unemployment rate and local wars (Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Kurdistan, Iraq). The immigrants chose Greece, at the time, because of its position as the most powerful capitalist economy in the Balkans.

Immigrants as permanent residents from the Eastern Block and the Balkans

The majority of them live in Athens and have families. They have a preference for areas where relatives, neighbours and friends have already been settled who are eager to offer them help with finding a job and accommodation for the first period. They live in downtown disadvantaged low-rent neighborhoods, close to efficient transport services and close to their workplaces and immigration services.

The biggest proportion (800.000) are muslims, a factor that causes additional separations from the locals and as a result these neighborhoods have become ghettoized. According to statistics they save much more money than the locals and not only in order to send remittances to their relatives. The Albanians in particular save enough to build houses or set up small businesses back home.

The immigrants that arrived during 1990 to 2005 were young poorly educated proletarian men. They made up the 10% of the labour force and it wasn't hard for them to find work (90% of them were salaried). They even had a record of low rated unemployment (3%), even lower than local workers contrary to other countries of EU-15, but they were always underpaid compared with Greek workers. They mostly worked part time and had many industrial accidents.

But after the end of the Olympic Games constructions, the workers were fired and the economic crisis that followed struck the construction industries which employed mainly immigrants most of them from Albania. Bulgarians and Hindu work at agriculture, Pakistani and Bangladeshi in manufacture. Immigrants also work in the trade, hotels, restaurants and a

part of them in “illegal economy”. Today immigrants have a larger unemployment rate than locals and lose their legalization not only because they don’t have the necessary amount of pension credits for residence permits but mostly because of the austerity policy that is imposed on locals and immigrants leading them to work non-registered. Due to the long time unemployment immigrants turn to self employment and convert their former professions to family businesses. There are stratifications and differentiations among the immigrants themselves. There were and still are cases where immigrants exploit other immigrants. It’s worth mentioning that some immigrants long living in Greece took part in the pogroms and the racist frenzy in Agios Panteleimonas caused by the fascist community.

Female immigrant workers who are Ukrainian, Russian, and Georgian have reached in numbers the population of male immigrant workers. There are no female Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Hindu workers. Those deus ex machina female immigrants supported with their cheap services Greek households releasing for the sake of capital the significant labour power of high skilled local women. Those immigrant women fill the gaps of the Welfare State and they are under the radar because their professions are degraded and non-formal. Their working sector is the second most populous after the construction industry.

Transit immigrants

Immigrant workers are still coming to Greece in the first years of the 00’s contributing significantly to the “wonder” of the Greek economic growth. The migrant flow has become huge since 2012, but because of the high unemployment rate the immigrants’ goal was to cross Europe.

At the same time between 2011 and 2012, 165.000 immigrants from countries outside the European Union are leaving Greece with their savings, most of them being Albanian. Despite the devaluation of our lives and wages many Albanians are still living in Greece as their children, the second generation immigrants refuse to go back to a place that they never actually got to know well, where they’ll feel like strangers, without this meaning that within the Greek nation state their lives are not degraded and marginalized.

Meanwhile, in the last 5 years the relentless war in Syria has created a huge refugee crisis counting 4.000.000 refugees. Most of them are still located in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Syrian refugees make up the 25% of the total population of these countries. At the same period, violent political conflicts and overthrows took part in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt.

From the total of the Syrian, Afghan, Iranian, Pakistani and Iraqi immigrants the 90% didn’t request an application for asylum to Greece because they were heading to central Europe mainly to Germany and Sweden. The media mainly showed the women and children in order to move the public opinion, but almost half of the Syrian and more than half of the

Afghan refugees were educated males under 35 and already economically active in their countries. But there were also female headed families.

Although war and destabilization drove them out of Syria and Afghanistan, when they were interviewed by United Nations officers and asked why they migrated they stated subjective motives with primary motive the search for work. That's why Germany's announcement of 500.000 working positions for refugees played a significant role in the migrant flows. The middle class crossed the borders first. In August a lot of data showed a 90% of immigrants highly educated with lawyer, doctor and architect degrees speak at least one second language. They were the ones who had good jobs before the war and saved a lot of money. Before they crossed the Aegean sea they lived displaced in other parts of their country or illegally in other countries. The lack of access to jobs which were proficient in, the coverage of living expenses and the avoidance of exploitation is the main reason (41%) why the Syrians have left their last locations. Later in winter, migratory flows include more proletarians. These "poor" migrant workers were trapped in Greece after the signing of the EU-Turkey agreement in March 2016. Those who failed to cross the borders from Idomeni (about 55.000 to date) were stacked in hot-spots, "accommodation centers" or detention centers and were forced to apply for asylum otherwise they were redirected in Turkey or in their home country. Among the Syrian refugees/immigrants there were persons who were persecuted by Assad regime who developed dissident activity. Those people had strong relations with the West and were part of groups of the society which took part in demonstrations for democratic rights. There is no doubt that there some of them were Assad's undercover henchmen who "abandoned ship".

What will be the political attitude of the first mentioned above group of migrant flows during their violent proletarianization in Northern Europe is an open issue.

Subjective causes for immigration

It's very clear to us that there are "objective causes" such as wars and misery, environmental catastrophes and political and social tyrannies, which are the origin of contemporary migrations.

But, are these "objective factors" enough, or do the people who move need subjective motives as well, in order to make this decision?

Are the immigrants solidarity objects? Or are they active subjects who are consciously planning their migratory routes? The first version is the one that this year the left fraction of capital attempted -and finally managed- to enforce, serving its best interests.

It is a matter of fact that capital treats the immigrants as if they are cheap and disciplined labour force, ready for exploitation. Given that fact, the EU states believed that

they could regulate the “migratory flows” to serve the prosperity of European capitalists and at the same time, violently exclude from entering those immigrants who did not meet their criteria. Recently, however, the hundreds of thousands of refugees/immigrants did not succumb to the European capitalist plans, as the immigrants future proletarians weren’t the disciplined and entirely controlled mass that they craved.

So it’s not only the capitalists’ need for “free” flow of labour force that determines the immigrants’ movement. There are also the immigrants’ needs, who occasionally become uncontrolled. This is the main reason why capitalists cannot always predict these movements and consequently try to control them.

According to Marxian analysis, the migratory phenomenon is analyzed with financial terms and is related to the so called by Marx, industrial reserved army, which is an overpopulation of labour force never being fully absorbed by production and as a result it gains mobility. Therefore a proportion of this population migrates. The Marxian outlook, parallel to the analysis of the economic terms of migration approached the phenomenon from its social perspective, extensively analyzing the migrant workers position in the host country, stressing out their proletarianization.

Recognizing that the capitalists with the immigrants aim at solving problems related to labour cost and work discipline, we believe that it is necessary to escape from a deterministic interpretation so that we can understand contemporary migration. Additionally, we are opposed to the antiracist view point of the left of the capital and its offshoots and a big part of the antiauthoritarian milieu, which portray the immigrants’ bodies as passive objects dragged along and overwhelmed by wars, disasters and poverty. In our opinion it is necessary to analyze the immigrants’ exploitation for capital accumulation as well as the plurality of position and problems that define the figure of the migrant. We have to get rid of the stereotypic figure of the migrant-victim of hunger, poverty who is in need of care and help. This picture triggers touching solidarity reactions and fills the gaps left behind by the Welfare State and also reproduces “paternalistic” logics.

Through these aspects and during the past year in Greece there were practices, developed by both left and antiauthoritarian solidarity activists, that demote migrants in an inferior position denying them all chance of becoming subjects. The individual motives of migratory movements vary. Some people were running away from their country’s political regime, wanting simply to avoid the risks posed on a daily basis from the civil war or the disintegration of the social and economic fabric, or even because they pursued a better life with more money and opportunities for themselves or financially supporting the burden of a large family back at home. They may be oppressed by strict prohibitions of their religion, wanting to pursue freely their sexual orientation or simply to enjoy love and life away from the tight social control at home. Women often claim that by migrating they wanted to escape

from the patriarchal control or a husband who abused them or to overcome a divorce. The goals of the immigrants / refugees were the avoidance of war, finding a job, getting higher education and reunification with their family. Afghans of Iran, for example, migrated for studies after the Iranian regime prohibited open Afghan schools, or their participation in Iranian schools, but also the Afghans of Afghanistan migrated aiming to study because people studying in Afghanistan enraged the Taliban.

The most important requirement for people to fulfill their desires is the economic capital. Equally important are links with networks that supply information for traffickers and passageways. Immigrants know whom to ask and whom to address. All this information is purchased with money. Clearly, people who migrated had a certain capital to cover a part of the journey, therefore they were not poor and compared with those who didn't have the ability to migrate at all, were almost 'wealthy'. Poorer Syrians, for example, remained stuck in Zaatari camp and Zarka City of Jordan and Bekaa Valley of Lebanon. Yet, the fewer the financial resources are, the more dangerous the journey is with more stopovers and different options. For example, the route from Pakistan to Greece cost around € 3.000 in 2003 and in 2010 when there was a stronger presence of police and Frontex the cost reached around 8.000-10.000 euro. Factors such as the land and sea borders, guarding, and the form of transportation (with trafficker or alone? With a visa? Inside of a truck? on foot?) changes the prices and gives priority to the ones that offer more money. The economic capital doesn't only determine who, when and how someone will move but also determines which country would be his or her final destination. For example, many Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Afghans, when interviewed, mentioned the US and Canada as an impossible dream due to the cost. Ultimately, the cost of the journey acts as a filter for the alluring destination countries, because the ones that arrive there are few in numbers and the wealthier and more educated. Patras, Igoumenitsa, Istanbul and Van were full of immigrants trying to raise money to continue their journey without success! The immigrants, permanent or transit, wealthy or poor, Albanian or Afghan, moving for safety reasons or strictly "economic" reasons, are always moving from underdeveloped, damaged in many cases economies of their region to the developed central economies. Immigrants are not passive but active participants in this process. This element combined with their upcoming proletarianization, sharpens the class contradictions and creates potential class conflicts.

- What political tactics do capital and the Greek state use for immigration control, and what do they aim at? Does Europe actually need immigrants?

At this point, we will focus on the political strategies and tactics that the Greek rightwing ruling fraction in the past and the leftwing government of SYRIZA in the present have used over the last twenty-five years to ensure that Greek and European/multinational capital will benefit the most from the migration phenomenon. The main point we want to make stands as follows: A crucial factor for the assurance of capital's continuous self-evaluation, mainly from the beginning of the 20th century and on, is the enlargement of the moving/shifting labour power, the exploitation of a part of the labour class population which is willing to shift over long geographical distances in order to settle in a new place. This view is the cornerstone of our analysis of the migration phenomenon.

We decided to begin with a critique of the recent events, the so called “refugee crisis” that emerged in Europe in 2015. The migration policies that the various European countries and the Greek government of SYRIZA have adopted from 2015 and on can be (satisfyingly) explained in terms of the above point of view. Let's get more specific.

The (conflicts in Syria and generally the) sharpening of the destabilization of the middle-east together with German and other European states' will to rally new labour force, generated large “waves of migration” coming from these regions. Both were necessary conditions for this massive population transplant to take place. But, why is immigrant's labour power useful for capital anyway? We would rather give the floor to German and IMF's officials.

In his interview in *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, Ingo Kramer, President of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, pointed out that giving help to immigrants is mainly a moral issue but he marked that they could also help Germany financially. “In the next 20 years we will need a much bigger workforce than the one the country can generate”, he said. He also spoke of 500.000 job vacancies. Frank-Jürgen Weise, Chairman of the Managing Board of the Federal Employment Agency, states that without the immigrants, Germany will have a shortfall of more than 6.5 million workers until 2025 in the job market because they will have to retire and for this reason “it is totally clear that Germany is in need of qualified skilled immigrants”. In his report, IMF recommends a short-term differentiation in the treatment of refugees and EU citizens, “to reduce”, as they say, “any possible resentment” from the citizens of the host countries. However, it highlights the generally positive economic impact of hosting refugees, even in the short term.

Well, what we derive from statements like these is that there is a strong tendency in the gulfs of the German state and international organizations that argues in an apt and revealing way about the benefits of Germany's national economy from the massive entry of immigrants in the country. The more pressing issue there appears to be the decline in Germany's working age population. This leads to an increase in the dependency ratio — the number of those in work who support those not in work. Immigrants fill this “age gap” and, at the same time, they

offer cheap labour power to local bosses and provide the essential conditions for a stable national insurance system. In order for German state to achieve all of the above, it had not only to “bring” millions refugees inside the country but, firstly, to recognise them as such and provide them with residence permit and, secondly, to legislatively adjust the minimum wage in lower levels specifically for immigrants, as they actually did. Let's keep in mind the particularities of Germany's migration policy paradigm and go back in time a little bit.

In the 90's Greece has been in a position that appears great similarities, as much as big differences, with Germany's present situation. It was back then that a large stream of people from the eastern block and especially from Albania was passing through Greek northern borders in order to settle down in the country. The large number of the immigrant population is for sure one noticeable similarity, but the most important one was Greek's capital thirst for labour power with the appropriate demographic characteristics, determination, perseverance and remarkably low price. This labour force was like manna from heaven at a time where Greek economy was in stagnation and Greek working class appeared to have increasing demands, relatively low productivity and a strong inclination for disobedience in the face of capitalist impositions, usually taking the form of massive strikes.

Now, the great difference from Germany's platform was that for the Greek state, creating a robust and refined insurance system was never the issue and still isn't. So, at that time, Greek's migration policy focused on providing Greek bosses with cheap labour force. A crucial requirement for this to be done was, once again, to create divisions among locals and immigrants both ideologically and materially, this time, by keeping a large part of this population in statutory invisibility. However, the state got inevitably face to face with its contradictions. On the one hand, its will to control the migration flows and immigrants' behaviour by statutory registering and regular inspections, on the other hand its need to retain immigrant's labour illegal and consequently devaluated. The result of this internal conflict was the emergence of several sporadic presidential decrees that provided some parts of immigrants with residence permit.

After many years of continuous vulgar exploitation of the immigrants' staying in Greece, things have evidently changed. Let's make a big step up to 2011. It is in October of this year that a significant change of the Greek migration policy started to become visible, yet not fully evolved. A new chapter opens when the social democratic party of PASOK imposed the setting up of a wall in the northern borders with Turkey that constituted a commonly used passage for immigrants. The construction of the wall finished one year later and included technologically advanced equipment, aiming at efficiently preventing immigrants from crossing the borders uncontrollably, meaning, without the proper registration procedures, at least in the first place.

Yet, it is in 2012 that the state's strategy strikingly shifts. Back then, the conservative right-wing ruling party, New Democracy, had to confront an internal financial crisis and ultimately to save a part of Greek capital from dissolving. At the same time it was necessary to keep the country inside the European Union as promised to the Greek people. By consequence, the government carried the burden of satisfying a part of multinational capital's interests, too.

What's the role of immigrants in this situation? Well, for sure not an easy one to play. Just three months before the completion of the erection of the wall, operation "Aspida" was put in place. It was apparent that even the wall would not be sufficient to keep away the "unwelcome foreigners". Two thousand policemen were set on foot to take control of the situation.

In the mainland, the circumstances had similarly changed. Golden Dawn, the Greek nationalist party, was elected for the first time in the parliament and its "flourishing" base was walking around the streets, undisturbed from the police, beating up immigrants with distinctive brutality. Police cruelty was spread out all over the Athenian streets after government's decision to put in place another operation called "Xenios Dias" (August 2012). The results were astonishing: 80.000 transfers and 5.000 arrests in one month. In addition, seven new detention centers were set up, this time not aiming merely at registering but mainly at punitive imprisonment and possible deportation. Non-native proletarians were being haunted by a huge percentage of unemployment, extensive racism, imminent deportation (27.382 between 2012-2013), confinement in miserable detention centers and dreadful working conditions, including frequent bosses' aggressions against them.

Not even blindness would prevent us from seeing that immigrant proletarians were not a blessing for Greek capital any more. The chapter with them being the protagonists in the restructuring of national economy and an essential element of variable capital, of labour power as part of the productive process, was closed. Well, maybe not for everyone, but for sure, an admittedly big part of them, and especially the newcomers, were more likely a pain in the ass, in terms of capital's need for seamless accumulation.

Well, this is actually still the case today in Greece. However, the strategies have been significantly modified together with the formation of the new government in 2015, with SYRIZA, a traditionally left-wing party, having the upper hand. This internal change coincided with the "refugee crisis" and SYRIZA had the responsibility to handle the situation.

We could divide this period in two phases in accordance with the different strategical orientations of SYRIZA.

The first phase begins with the explosive arrival of immigrants through Turkey's sea-borders in the nearby Greek islands. The terminology used by media and government's

officials had somewhat changed. Till then, we would rarely hear government's officials in Greece using the term “refugees” instead of “illegal immigrants”. Even the prime minister proclaimed solidarity with refugees as a national duty. Anyhow, talking was not sufficient, not for a party engaged to anti-racism and struggle for human rights for the last 25 years. Its rank-n-file would be deeply disappointed with a deviation from its party's main principles.

Therefore, acts should be put in place. There was one important condition, though, that needed to be satisfied: the newly invented tactics should strengthen SYRIZA's anti-racist profile and simultaneously stand in favor of Greek and European capital. The second part is what binds together the interests of Greek and German national economies. Finding the golden ratio between the two goals was the quintessence of left-wing biopolitics.

Let's get to the facts. The government gives immediate order to the navy to stop the deportations. It announces the closure of immigrant detention centers in the next 100 days. It provides safe conditions and even embarks ships for immigrants to reach the northern borders. Additionally, it lets immigrants passing through the country unregistered so that they leave as fast as possible and reach the “hospitable” north. This tactic makes clear the will of SYRIZA to “get rid of” the immigrants simply because they couldn't be absorbed as the living element of capital whilst Germany, and other European countries in the north, were in actual need of them. SYRIZA also achieved to mitigate the reactions of locals that inhabit regions where immigrants ephemerally used to camp, by turning them into a fruitful target market. It wasn't necessary for immigrants to be repressed. Local economies could take advantage of immigrants' and solidarity activists' purchasing power, their need for food, accommodation, etc.

Let's take a break for a while and ask ourselves: Is this a racist policy? Okay, for now, this might remain an open question. But the list grows longer. A new migration law and a statute about Greek citizenship, both benefiting the immigrants, were instituted in July of the same year. The number of deportations was drastically decreased (1,000 during 2015). In February of 2016 the Ministry of Commerce along with Hellenic Federation of Enterprises organized an event aiming at food gathering from companies. The Minister of Education, by sending an official bulletin, asked schools to collect goods and essentials. The best school in terms of solidarity would even get an award. Likewise, several regional governors and mayors supported by SYRIZA took part in this campaign by organizing music concerts dedicated to refugees, aiming at their material support. The institutional solidarity movement was staggeringly broadened and even highly rationalized, taking under consideration its sudden growth. For example, Rena Dourou regional governor of Attiki, along with the Ministry of Commerce, set up a logistics center committed to the distribution of goods for immigrants.

During this period, multiple social infrastructures have emerged out of the blue, manned by activists of all kinds. Everyone took part in their own way. Non-governmental organizations and SYRIZA's rank-n-file played a crucial role in the movement of solidarity. A

notable fact is that NGOs were financed by E.U. and the Greek state. Anti-authoritarian militants' contribution was not negligible at all.

The point we want to make here is that solidarity was one of the basic pillars of the government's migrant strategy especially while involving volunteers. In this way SYRIZA's plan could be carried through with less public spending. Even anti-authoritarian groups have unwittingly helped in this plan to be carried out. We should bear in mind that during this period no immigrant had Greece in his mind as his final destination. Among 1,000,000 people passing through the country, only 55.000 of them finally stayed in (by force). This condition made the establishment of strong political relations between locals and immigrants impossible. The development of such a connection would be the only chance for the solidarity movement to evolve into a threat for capital's reproduction.

There was one more consequence of the prevalence of SYRIZA's paradigm, one that fitted with its general tactics concerning the ideological handling of the proletariat. It was the spreading among working class of the notion that there was no way for the state to satisfy our needs in the degree that once did. The only solution would be to support one another and even self-organize to satisfy our needs. That means that, in order to survive, we should share our poverty. That was a pretty convenient ideology as it would help reactions against the new austerity measures, voted during July and August 2015 and then again in May 2016, to be marginalized and shrank.

In general, what we want to argue for in these paragraphs is that, even though SYRIZA did follow an anti-racist policy at the time, its political platform is not necessarily contradictory with capital's self-valorization and might even be helpful. The state doesn't need to be racist, totalitarian, fascist or whatever, to ensure the reproduction of capital as a social relation.

Nevertheless, in each and every occasion, working class is going to suffer. In each and every occasion, there will be blood! People actually died passing through Greek borders and most of those who lived have been roughly impoverished.

But, throwing away the well-structured marxian terminology and the thorough non-orthodox marxist critique concerning capitalist state simply by saying that the state is in its essence racist, well... that is not the case with us. We believe that in this way reality is obscured and a deviation from class oriented thinking and acting could be provoked.

The second phase comes when Germany decided that the number, the demographic characteristics and the rhythm that immigrants were arriving in the country was not acceptable. As already mentioned, Kramer had declared that there were 500.000 job vacancies in Germany in 2015, but about 890.000 immigrants had arrived during the "refugee crisis", many children included. Germany needed to control the flows of migration in order for the

immigrants to be absorbed in the labour market smoothly and with the least possible spending. An important issue is the investments needed on the part of the state to raise refugee's qualifications (spending for language courses, schools, universities).

Thus, it was necessary for the paths leading to Germany to be blocked. The Greek government couldn't keep going with the same policy. The state was actually threatened to be kicked out of Schengen if it didn't accept the EU-Turkey agreement which imposes that the Greek borders should be closed. Consequently 55.000 newly arrived immigrants should be restrained inside the country. Also, every immigrant coming to Greece through the Aegean sea must return to Turkey if his application for asylum - considering that one is submitted - is disapproved (which is the most common case). The ease with which SYRIZA could balance between the previously mentioned goals gradually vapoured. SYRIZA found himself walking the line between its obligations towards the EU-Turkey agreement and its commitments towards its rank-n'-file. Repression and violence should be more frequently used. The detention centers opened once again for those not coming from Syria. The police evacuated two big makeshift migration camps, one in Idomeni and one in Piraeus port. Also, in Thessaloniki, the police evacuated two newly emerged squats serving as hosting places for immigrants and an old one (Orfanotrofio) which was hosting initiatives very much involved in the refugee solidarity movement. Once again, SYRIZA achieved to serve the interests of the multinational capital.

The curtain is not yet brought down. Many things depend on the movement. Will it continue with the same tactics and ideologies? Will the struggles of the local proletarians unify with the struggles of the immigrants? Well, for sure, if nothing changes, the consequences will be cruel for the working class as a whole.

-Immigrants' class struggles in Greece and our estimation about them

Immigrants who have been living and working for the last 25 years in Greece, have participated in a series of class struggles. Their legalization played a huge role in their struggles resulting in their social inclusion, making them more demanding. These struggles were organised in common with local workers. As they co-existed in factories, in craft industries and other workplaces they joined forces. On the one hand, they demanded higher wages, pension credits, insurance and better work conditions and on the other, equal rights and legalization. State repression was also a constant issue, causing more conflicts. In the riots of December of 2008, transit immigrants and refugees also participated but their presence was small in numbers and with a different content. In 2012 the Greek state started confining them in concentration camps and the state repression

increased. As a result transit immigrants and refugees started organising their struggles and protested against their imprisonment, confinement conditions and deportation. In the last years and during the migrant crisis, new kinds of demands started to appear, like the demand for open borders and free movement.

Class struggles in workplaces/ Wage related struggles

In the 2000s local and immigrant workers, worked and struggled together for the Olympic Games infrastructure. The lack of safety measures on the construction sites caused 13 worker fatalities resulting in 8 different strikes. The workers demanded insurance and safer working conditions. In many work fields, including factory workplaces and agricultural production, immigrants have been fighting for wages, insurance and legalisation for many years. In the agriculture, immigrants tended and still tend to fight alone because Greek workers don't work there and the solidarity movements are too far away to join their cause. In Manolada, in Peloponnese, when the immigrant workers demanded their payment and higher wages, their bosses sent out henchmen who shot and injured 30 of them. In Lakonia, other land workers demanded their legalisation and better treatment from the police. In Thessaloniki 500 Egyptian fishermen participated in a strike because their daily wage was reduced.

In the riots of December 2008 due to the killing of a teenage boy by a cop, young, second generation, immigrant students participated in direct actions against the state, many of whom were organised in political groups. They joined Greeks in occupations, discussions and lootings. On the other hand, immigrants who saw themselves as staying only temporarily in Greece, participated in these conflicts spontaneously and the lootings were seen by them as means to get by commodities. Later in the month, henchmen sent by bosses threw acid in the face of Konstantina Kouneva, a woman from Bulgaria who was a unionist and worked as a cleaner for a contract company. Their target was to stop her from fighting for workers' rights. This incident urged us all to confront our class enemies and the ground was fertile for an aggressive class conflict because the flames of December were still burning. Greeks and immigrants including Kouneva's female immigrant co-workers joined forces in a common struggle that broke out in a series of direct actions, like the occupation of the workplaces and the train station that Kouneva and her co-workers worked and several attacks on their company's offices.

In 2011, 300 immigrants started a hunger strike. Even though their struggle was controlled by the Left, issues like the number of pension credits necessary to get residence and labour permits came to the forefront.

Struggles concerning border policy and confinement conditions

Later on, while the economic crisis worsened and the Greek state's stance became tougher against the migrant flows, struggles demanding the liberation from the detention centers emerged all over the country. Politically organised people were taking part in solidarity movements, demanding detention centers to close down and better confinement conditions. They were also critical about border policing. Most of the times, prisoners tend to face the issue of their release as an individual matter, without fighting for more collective causes. An exception was a huge hunger strike of 2000 immigrants in 2013 all over Greece, who were fed up with the starvation conditions and their degradation and also with the arbitrary increase of their detention time.

In August of the same year, immigrants revolted in the detention center of Amigdaleza setting fire to the containers that they lived in, after being fed up with police brutality. In parallel, there were revindicative struggles going on in small factories against the reduce of salaries and the firing of immigrant workers due to the "crisis", which the solidarity movement hardly ever noticed and never attempted to connect them with struggles concerning confinement conditions.

In the Autumn of 2014, Syrian refugees camped in Syntagma square, demanding the right of asylum and issuing of passports, but were dispersed one month later, some by police intervention and some on their own accord. Samaras' right wing government promised to launch an asylum request process and provide them with travelling documents. Promises that he never kept.

The transition from the right to the left management of the migrant crisis and the reaction of solidarity movement

From January 2015, when the left fraction of capital took over the management of crisis, it applied an antiracist policy. The way it handled the explosive migratory flows in the summer of 2015 radically differs from that of the right. Germany had obviously decided that it needed devalued workers, who it would draw from the pool of undocumented immigrants, and this was crucial for the Greek state's attitude towards immigrants.

In conjunction with the "state's solidarity" and the NGO's funded both by the state and European Union, a solidarity movement from the left, the former components of Syriza and the anti-authoritarians, was created, oriented from the start, towards the refugees/ migrants' needs.

Migrants wanted a fast and safe passage through the country, and as the movement was adjusted to its subjective prospects, it defined its limits. Its content was dictated by the character of the migratory flows, becoming humanitarian. The solidarity movement was not characterised by any opposition to austerity policies, which equally plague both

local and immigrant proletarians. It wasn't demanding welfare benefits on immigrants' behalf or issues concerning the reproduction of the labour force and was restricted to volunteering. Solidarity activists' voluntary work was an enormous help to the state, taking off the load from the state's shoulders, as long as it covered, on its part, the needs of the immigrants and refugees until they crossed the border out of the country. Free movement was a common target for solidarity activists and immigrants as well as the state, until the agreement between European Union and Turkey was signed.

Once the Europeans took what they wanted, in the autumn of 2015, fences started being raised along the borders (in Hungary first). It was then, that the immigrants' reactions against the border policy started and escalated until the signing of the agreement which trapped them in Greece. Meanwhile, in Idomeni camp there was a long-lasting occupation of the railway line by the immigrants which cost money for capital, since this line was the one that Cosco used for the transportation of its cargoes to Central Europe. The immigrants continued even after the signing of the agreement and reached a climax with protests and hunger strikes in detention centers and hotspots all over Greece. In Athens, small groups of immigrants protested in the city centre and were stopped by the police. On the island of Chios there was an occupation of the port by immigrants. On the islands of Mytilini and Samos the appalling conditions made the immigrants burn their camps. In Mytilini the under aged immigrants were the ones involved in the burnings.

From autumn of 2015 as the border policy towards the migratory flows hardened, a squatting movement was created exclusively for the immigrants' housing needs. In Mytilini, immigrants along with solidarity activists occupied the Local Union Center building. But they were faced with the Communist party's mechanism violently demanding that the solidarity activists leave the place so they could take charge, driving away the immigrants.

The solidarity movement manages the housing squats excluding the immigrants from the assemblies and, while the number of local homeless families has increased due to the crisis, the occupations are only accessible to immigrant families. Selections are made by the participants of the solidarity movement to immigrants themselves. For example, single male migrants were expelled to avoid "controversy" and for outside world to see an 'appealing environment'. In addition, a part of the participants involved in these occupations were associated with movements of Syriza or groupings that have recently left Syriza. The occupation of Notara street building, City Plaza hotel, and the 5th high school of Exarchia are the best known examples of the squats. The occupation of Notara "was facilitated" by the Ministry of Public Order preventing the cops from entering the building on November 17. Calls were made to the Immigration Department

for the reconnection of electricity power. In the occupation of City Plaza, journalists of “Avgi”, the newspaper of Syriza, participated in the squat.

Every time there was an interest in common claims issues (being rarely the case), such as the increase of school funds or against teachers layoffs from public school, those interests were isolated. Instead, meetings of the Ministry of Education with solidarity committees were promoted to "settle the issue" of the integration of refugee children, who were confined in Greece after the agreement of March 18, posing the question of having evening classes in the squats teaching the basics to children by people of the NGOs. In these squats, some part of the anti-authoritarian milieu participated and the squats were presented as independent and not controlled by political party mechanism.

On our part, we are not surprised by such "collaborations". As the solidarity movement remains trapped exclusively in demands of a humanitarian content, the assimilation of the movement by Syriza or ex-Syriza components is not a contradiction. A political party with an anti-racist agenda and an antiracist solidarity movement were expected to share common goals. In 2012, the solidarity movement could easily be clearly distinct from the far-right governed state, by having an anti-racist agenda. Today, the solidarity movement tries to separate itself from the left management of the State, insisting on detecting racist practices and militarisation when we actually have a democratic management of common issues of a capitalist state, such as border protection or evacuation of an immigrant camp near the borders and on the railway line. Vain efforts! The autonomous proletarian actions are defined by contents that proletarians put themselves. Proletarian immigrants should have access to the Greek welfare state, in our opinion. So as proletarians offering solidarity, we should be debating and fighting for the overall increase in social public spending, since we have a class oriented perspective. It is not enough to construct an identity, the identity of the worker. What matters is what we demand, what we claim. It is this that shows the community among the proletarians and showcases class consciousness. And while in this current situation the specific form of devaluation is the memoranda, this overwhelming solidarity movement has not truly acquired an anti-memorandum content, not even for a while.

A huge part of the solidarity movement by anarchists and the left is based on one distinction: “we are the privileged of the working class since we have food and shelter, while the immigrants are homeless and starving and thus they need our help” that is their way of thinking removing the class element from the struggles.

Class struggles with the immigrants

Our analysis is that the struggles should be fought WITH the immigrants, not FOR the immigrants. Some of them belong to the same class with us and some will undergo proletarianization on the way. Continuing to distance ourselves from them due to their

depreciation is practically dysfunctional, since it undermines our mutual interests. Their debasement from productive and potentially revolutionary subjects, to simply degraded people who need our help, serves capitalist interests, because labour struggles are being neglected favoring a charity that is easily recuperated by the system and finally blunts class contradictions leaving capital and state beyond the reach of criticism. Charity practices work as a relief valve eliminating all desire of resistance while the locals in the solidarity movements voluntarily do the state's job undertaking the responsibilities of the state with their own wages and hard work. The result is the "redistribution" of poverty from the poor to the poorer. From our perspective, class solidarity towards immigrants means common claims for our class. This however presupposes that the immigrants will stay in Greece, either by choice or out of necessity. It is with these workers we have to join as comrades through a class orientated movement for the increase of the value of the labour power. Immigrants will see themselves in this movement, so common struggles can emerge. Besides, immigrants have proven their initiative to fight for better living conditions and higher wages.