

Analysis of a Hunger Strike 2015 in Greece

Network of Combative Prisoners (DAK)

December 18, 2015

Contents

Network of Combative Prisoners (DAK) in Greece – Analysis of a Hunger Strike	4
A strategic analysis of the conditions	4
The initial planning of the strike	5
The wager of co-formulation	8
How SYRIZA dealt with the hunger strike	11
The attitude of the “conservative” camp	12
The final outcome of the struggle	13
Particularities of the struggle	16
The goal setting of the strike	17

Greece April 21, 2015

After 48 days of struggle we end the hunger strike we carried out together with other political prisoners, against the legal manifestation of the anti-revolutionary and wider social strategy of the State expressed through special legislations of exclusion. After yesterday's completion of the procedure in parliament, an important part of the demands placed by the Network of Combative Prisoners, were in part won.

Specifically:

- The legal framework that defines the operation of C'type prisons.
- The abolishment of the burdensome provision for acts carried out with covered faces (hoodie law), the minimum limit of sentencing for demonstrations and robberies was decreased from 10 to 5 years (leaving the frame of evaluating the conditions under which the act was carried out, up to the judge).
- The implication of an independent expert on DNA matters was set as well as a first step concerning the delimitation of its violent extracting.
- House arrest for Savvas Xiros will be enforced (98% disability) in order for him to receive the necessary treatment, something that will go for all prisoners who have more than 80% disability.

All hunger strikers together with the comrades outside the walls fought this hard painful struggle with dignity. The regime of exclusion was ruptured and now the path has opened for its complete abolishment. These 48 days of uncompromising struggle ended in a positive outcome on a tactical level, which is a gain for all those "below". A positive outcome for the total struggle against the world of the bosses and the new totalitarianism they impose. Our aim is to exploit the ground that was won in order to become more efficient, more dangerous for authority. In order to get one step closer to a classless society. We share the life-giving flames of satisfaction with all those who felt this battle as a common cause.

STRENGTH TO THOSE WHO DO NOT BOW THEIR HEAD

Those participating in the Network of Combative Prisoners, Adonis Staboulos, Giorgos Karagiannidis, Fivos Xarisis, Argiris Dalios, Akis Sarafoudis, Andreas-Dimitris Bourzoukos, Dimitris Politis, Giannis Mihailidis.

P.S. In the future we will make a thorough statement concerning the matters this struggle opened. About its limits and the different outcomes it could have, given the new political and movement rhythms which itself highlighted and with which it proceeded. Because only through honest review and critical dialogue can we secure even more victorious struggles.

P.S.2 The day the legislation was voted into parliament, the "leftist" government clearly showed the real face of authority. The morning eviction of the occupied Rectorate in Athens and the arrest of comrades who were inside is the living proof that

authority will always (left and right) be bothered by the un-mediated struggles aimed against the nature of the system they serve. Solidarity and strength to all the comrades who were arrested during this struggle.

Network of Combative Prisoners (DAK) in Greece — Analysis of a Hunger Strike

A strategic analysis of the conditions

Any attempt to make a full assessment of the struggle should surely contain an analytical description of the incidents and the frame of thought that led us to undertake it. So, looking for a conceivable starting point in this struggle, we can locate it in the mass hunger strike of last summer (4,500 prisoners) and possibly earlier than that, in the hunger strike of the prisoners in Malandrinou prisons (the first C'type prisons) in 2004. Of course for such a recursion, apart from the fact that it would require many pages and therefore time, we are also probably not the best suited to the task. Therefore the starting point that we will take in order to unfold our outline of thought is the hunger strike in the summer of 2014. At that time a first battle was undertaken against the C'type prisons by a large number of prisoners. Of course, the development and the results of that struggle were not what we had desired and this left an “open wound” that we had to deal with. From that moment a problem arose that would become the spearhead of the mobilizations we intended to start when the first transfers to C'type prisons took place. Of course our outline of thought changed significantly the moment the elections started to become visible (always taking into account the possibility that the government might change). Time-wise therefore, two months before the election of SYRIZA, we had already started to discuss an outline of struggle among ourselves, totally aimed against the regime of exclusion, as it had been formed over these past years. The reason we turned to a wider outline with demands that have been at the forefront of the radical movement for years now, was the result of political analysis and an evaluation of the facts.

Obviously, judging from the result, we could say that to a large degree we were well off our initial evaluations, but this is something we will analyze further on. Returning to the procedure of forming our political frame of thought, we believe that the election of SYRIZA was of crucial importance and by extension our strategic choice of enemy in a battle we planned to fight as well. We believe —and still believe—that it is our obligation to overcome the election of a “leftist” government to a great degree because of assimilation and compromise, revealing the contradic-

tions that necessarily erupt in the attempt of a “leftist” management by authority. Thus we reached a plan of three points: political, strategic and tactical targets. Before going on to explain this frame of thought we ought to explain more analytically something we wrote in an internal text that we circulated on the first day of the hunger strike and has to do with the choice of the time of this struggle. The choice of appropriate timing for going to battle is a factor in this in order to have the best possible preconditions for gaining ground with the lowest cost. Especially in such a battle, where we chose to completely expose and contend some basic aspects of the exclusion regime, as an opponent SYRIZA offered us more advantages than the previous governments.

First of all, time-wise we thought that there would be a period of a few months (roughly till the summer) when SYRIZA would be more “vulnerable”, since as of May the pressure from the tripartite of loan sharks for an agreement would intensify and in our opinion the government would succumb. Either way, the turn of SYRIZA to conservatism was happening rapidly, something that is now obvious in every sphere: economic, oppressive, environmental, etc, therefore the more favorable time for us to give this battle over these few months. Secondly, besides the favorable time, SYRIZA presented additional characteristics that favored the clash with them. The arrangement within it as well as its base, the “air” of change it evangelized, its fear of being compared with the previous government and of being exposed, as well as the statements of its top executives concerning all the matters we finally placed as demands (minus the DNA which either way was placed in public deliberation for the first time because of our strike) are parameters that would put it up against its contradictions. Our planning was therefore based on the change of government, but simultaneously there was also the “danger” of a rapid “turn” of SYRIZA becoming more conservative. When the dilemma appeared, therefore, of whether to take time to better organize the struggle with the danger of the government becoming more conservative and therefore becoming a greater fortification from the side of the State against our demands, or to begin the struggle immediately no matter what the consequences that this would have within the movement, we chose the latter.

The initial planning of the strike

Of course, even then, the planning by DAK (Network of Fighting Prisoners) put the struggle a month later in order for us to better prepare the “ground”, even minimally, inside as well as outside the walls. That is to say, our aim was a gradual incrementation of the struggle—that would conclude with a hunger strike—refusing to return to cells in the afternoon, food abstentions, publication of texts and other actions from our side that would appropriately prepare the struggle inside the walls.

Things that would take place simultaneously with a procedure of fermentation with the comrades outside and similar actions, aiming at the “grounding” of our demands on a larger social field. Beyond, however, the practical differences that such a preparation would have in the development of the struggle—both inside and outside— for us the most crucial part of all was the attempt to change the terms on which a hunger strike would take place.

As a collectivity of anarchist hostages, over these last two and a half years we have sought a clearly comradely and political relationship with all the comrades outside the walls who realize the need to connect struggles inside and outside prison. We have spoken during many events, have politically connected with various projects and comrades, we have exchanged rationales about the struggle. We never conceived the comrades as tools that would help us to achieve our goals. Among ourselves, as well as in the relations we create, we try to not promote this kind of “culture”. Besides, the enemy we are fighting is not only the State machinery and the management of capital, but is also reflected in the alienated relations that poison the whole social body. Therefore, as long as we want to be consistent with our proposals, but also in the struggle we are carrying out against authority, it is important that we do not reproduce these pathologies in our interior.

We recognize that over these last years—at least—hunger strikes were mainly a result of initiatives of the fighters inside the walls with a minimal coordination with the comrades outside, resulting in almost reflex reactions by the movement. That is mainly what we wanted to change and make a first attempt at substantial communication, clarifying in practice that we consider ourselves part of this struggle, not its glowing pioneer. As DAK, we have clarified that we do not perceive the solidarity movement and the struggle that is created, as an army of applauders that will follow our orders. A purely political hunger strike should (contrary to what happened in the end) break the introversion that usually stems from the “personal” strikes that have taken place over these past years. Incarceration, unfortunately, increases the distance between prisoners and the movement, resulting in the movement often being considered the “natural” extension of struggles that are ignited within the walls, essentially putting aside the fertile delineation. Thus solidarity also develops a rather procedural character, like the obvious that erupts without the necessary political fermentation. Therefore, for us it was necessary to redefine the limitations of a struggle taking place inside and out in order for the connections between the struggles to cease being a theoretical approach to the question of incarceration, and so the first steps were taken (necessary steps!) for our essential evolution. Of course, we were led to the same paths once again. Unfortunately the informing of the movement (to a large degree), took place on the day that the hunger strike began.

Once again we confronted many comrades with a *fait accompli*, just as we were. Because for some, communication with groups and people who fight, is a “luxury” not a necessity. This might all seem “ridiculous” to some people, but for us these are chronic pathogenies of the movement (which we found facing us once again) which we must definitively overcome. We must leave space for co-formulation and evolution and not catastrophic introversion. Thus the struggle we had prepared decided on three target points. First, the political aspect, that is to say the clear separation of the radical subversive movement from those who believed in an alternative management of authority. And, simultaneously, practically dealing with the ever intensifying repressive policy, attempting to cause some wounds in the means the State has at its disposal. In a nutshell the cracking of a compact political dogma of repression aimed at the people of the struggle as a whole, but also those whom the system considers unnecessary. Of course such a political target has countless expressions, our choice to focus on the anti-terrorist laws, the C’type prisons, the “hood law” and DNA extraction, was because we believe that these specific matters are the front line of the oppressive policy of modern totalitarianism. They are matters that touch the substance of the regime of exclusion and consequently the whole of the movement.

Motivated by this analysis we also set out the immediate strategic targets that this struggle could reach. These strategic targets were the bringing together of the radical space within the framework of a movement—something that would show from the first months of the “left” governing, that the struggle against wretchedness is a struggle against delegation and assimilation—as well as the bringing together of the anarchist and communist prisoners under a common political framework that concerns all of those who resist. Of course through this struggle we were also seeking the accomplishment of some tactical targets. That is to say the alleviating of the penal framework that concerns us and those who could possibly find themselves in our position in the future, and simultaneously the opportunity through this struggle for a further development of the dynamic of the anarchist movement, a rekindling against the climate of resignation that the voting of SYRIZA had brought for a large part of society. How far these three targets were accomplished is something we will analyze further on, as well as the degree to which our demands were satisfied, which also redefines our initial planning and the analysis that led us to such an advanced political framework. We ought to make a self-critique (and a critique at the same time) about how correctly we evaluated the political scene as a whole and the power relations.

The wager of co-formulation

Within the framework of dialectic unity, we shared our outline of thought with the hostage comrades with whom we considered, back then, we had even the slightest political connection, specifically: Maziotis, Koufodinas, Gournas. Our initial communication brought no results since the political prisoners of Domokos disagreed with the widened political context and insisted that the struggle only concern the C'type prisons. Later, however, and in the name of an alleged co-formulation, there was a change of position from their side, which opened a round of discussions surrounding the demands that we had set as DAK. These discussions had the DNA demand as its epicentre, which for some of the prisoners of Domokos was not a political demand but a personal one. Therefore, because for various reasons there is a misunderstanding concerning what a personal demand is, we must state something evident right now. The two anti-terrorist laws, the 'hood law', incarceration in a C'type regime and the extension of the use of DNA to a degree that covers everything, is the intensification of the police-judicial control applied not only to us, but to thousands of other prisoners or accused. To state that the DNA demand is personal because it is the main charge for some of us, so only concerns a number of hunger-strikers, is like saying that the anti-terrorist law concerns only those convicted by it, or that the existence of C'type prisons only concerns those incarcerated in them. To forget the violent or coercive extractions of DNA from arrestees in clashes in Skouries, or in hundreds of judicial cases, is like forgetting that about 3000 prisoners are persecuted under law 187, or that dozens of comrades and robbers are persecuted under the "hood law".

Of course the arguments about why this demand is not political were exhausted in the concept that we cannot ask for the abolition of DNA extractions, since it is like asking for the abolition of finger prints, something that obviously has nothing to do with the demand we had made concerning DNA. At the same time the proposition also came from Domokos to demand the release of Savvas Xiros, which we supported from the start and included in our political outline. Unfortunately, however, all these discussions about demands (especially the DNA one) obtained the grotesque result of an ultimatum from Domokos, saying that if we did not remove the DNA demand they would begin a hunger strike on a date unknown to us, with their own political outline, which would essentially be the DAK proposition minus the DNA demand. A proposition for a joint drafting of struggle turned into a 'race', and we still find it hard to comprehend the motives and political concepts of the people who rushed to begin the hunger strike. On the other hand the results of this choice are now facts and we can analyze them. Before we do that however, we ought to open a parenthesis and explain the reasons why we are publicly mentioning these otherwise internal procedures.

For better or for worse therefore (history will judge that) we do not think that every struggle is personal and by extension identified with one person or group of people. Even if the ignition comes from certain people, the reference and effect of each struggle touches all of the radical/subversive movement. Therefore the struggle as a whole does not concern only the subjects participating in it, and surely the path of its development is not intrigues and public bickering stemming from a wrong perception about reputation or the prestige of a name. On the contrary, the qualitative upgrading of the struggle stems from a substantial assessment and fertile critique of its political characteristics. For us, mud-slinging from the struggle “specialists” everywhere is in no way a reason to open a public debate. On the contrary, precisely because we believe that such a public confrontation favours no one other than authority. We consciously choose to ignore such an attack, which stands on absolutely no political argument, without for that meaning that we have nothing to say of course. We simply think that an open dialogue must aim at theoretical and practical fermentation within the movement, aiming at its constant development.

Closing this parenthesis, we come back to our communications with Domokos, the informal blackmail and its practical results. Therefore, after many discussions and as our disagreements, political as well that of demands, could not be overcome, we decided to go ahead with three separate texts and common demands (except for the DNA demand which we placed as DAK), with minimal coordination and a common starting point. At this point we had clarified in every way, and it had been accepted, that there must be a two-week to a month period to inform collectives and individual comrades in order for them to prepare for the upcoming struggle. However, the day after this coordination (27/2), a prisoner in the C’ type prisons, G. Sofianidis, began a hunger strike aimed at continuing his studies in Koridallios. The political prisoners in Domokos thought that with this hunger strike the matter of C’ type prisons as a whole was placed, so they could not remain uninvolved and began the hunger strike immediately. Thus it was clarified to us—in ultimatum terms once again—that they would begin on 2/3, despite our objections that something like that would be a mistake as the comrades in solidarity had not been adequately informed. It is problematic to say the least when people proposing the creation of an organized revolutionary movement aiming at the social revolution, operate coercively without the slightest respect, not only for us but also the comrades outside. Although, as we said before, we despise the “culture” (that also thrives in the fighting field), that perceives people (even comrades) as tools and means for reaching a target, we found ourselves faced with a new dilemma where no choice seemed right to us. Either begin according to the timetable we had decided on (that is, a month later), respecting the procedures of the comrades outside the walls and realizing the common struggle we had chosen to fight, or to also begin on 2/3, tak-

ing on from the start the weight and difficulties of a struggle fought with minimal to no organization. Therefore we decided to also begin on 2/3, thinking that if we started later there would already be a dynamic developed in the struggle of the other political prisoners and mainly because we would not hold the same weight as them.

Here we would like to point out that we had shared our strategy with the other political prisoners from the start, that is, first of all the gradual integration into the strike so that organisms with different stamina and more severe health issues could bear the same weight as everyone else and so that all the strikers could put on pressure with their health at the same time. This was a matter of value, as well as a practical problem, since for us the crucial health situation of some (a few) strikers could not speed up the procedures from the government, which from the start we thought would take over a month. With this in mind we had said to the rest of the political prisoners that, due to the lack of preparations and the length of time the strike would take, they would have to drink sugar and (boxed) juices at first, in order to maintain the basic vitamins of the body at a good level. A maintenance that of course does not negate the hunger strike, since the deterioration of the body as a whole is a fact. Even the international experience from hunger strikes, which were carried out with an equivalent maintenance strategy such as the lengthy strikes of the fighters from Turkey who count 125 dead (who were maintained with sugar, tea with sugar and vitamins), bring only one result. The complete degradation of the body and death, and this is indisputable. We for our part therefore chose the strategy we thought would be necessary, seeing before us a lengthy struggle, with a great possibility of going on till after Easter, so there would be a “dead” time when the parliament would be closed.

However, besides the strategy that we intended to follow as the practical part of the strike, we had also informed the other political prisoners of the part concerning the negotiations with the government that would take place during the struggle. We had clarified therefore, at every level (something that is intentionally concealed), that the lawyer and the parents who visited the minister did not do so at our urging but that it was their own initiative, which had nothing to do with the hunger strike we were preparing. We had also stated to the political prisoners, as well as to the lawyers involved in the case, that they would in no way have the role of representing us, but that any contact they had with the ministry would be within a framework of informing us about the intentions of the government and not to negotiate. Something that was already happening, and any contacts carried out within the framework of negotiation were with a representative of the ministry who came to the prisons and spoke to us directly.

How SYRIZA dealt with the hunger strike

From the beginning of the strike the SYRIZA government avoided making any reference to our struggle. The same people who in previous strikes (with Nikos Romanos' three month hunger strike as the most recent example) would not stop talking, now, together with the media they control, completely concealed our struggle. SYRIZA as the eminent representative of the leftist regime always had the dirty role of assimilator of radical struggles and movements. The examples of the recent past are many and informative. From the de-politicisation of anarchist arrestees and hunger strikers and the limitation of their alleged "solidarity" exclusively to within the sector that touches on "human rights", up to the systematic trading of hope for the "left for the first time" government and the deflation of the militant anti-memorandum protests during 2010–12. From Skouries where they accuse as provocateurs the comrades and locals clashing with the boss interests up to the anti-fascist struggle, which they perceive strictly within institutional frames. The first hundred days of their governing have confirmed our main predictions. The pre-election commitments have long gone, the famous "red lines" continuously move, the extermination of the hunger strikers has nothing to envy of the right-wing governments of the past, the police State continues.

Specifically for the strike of the political prisoners the government chose the strategy of completely disregarding it. It is characteristic that although 28 members of SYRIZA deposited two "photographic" amendments that satisfied some of our demands, NO governmental executive made the slightest reference to the strike, despite the pressure of the entirety of the conservative camp which spoke of "satisfying the demands of the terrorists". Therefore while it was obvious that because of our struggle there were provisions added to the legislation, the government (faithfully following the choices of their predecessors) presented them as humanitarian, although either way it was their commitment. Simultaneously they purposely chose to stall the deposition and voting of the legislation, testing our stamina and playing dangerous games with the strikers' health, seeking in this way to get us to stop the struggle, giving them the possibility to vote in even less than what the legislation finally included. This pursuit of SYRIZA was also reinforced by the gradual secession of the strikers in the period between the 27th and 39th days of the strike. The stopping of the struggle by the rest of the strikers combined with the "dead" time during Easter gave SYRIZA an alibi for stalling, hoping that we would stop and that the legislation would be voted in without the pressure of the strike, as well as the occupation of the Deanery and the rest of the solidarity actions. In hindsight we estimate that if we had not continued the struggle the minister would not have accepted the amendments for the DNA and the 'hoodie

law' while he would possibly have given in to the provision for disabled prisoners, which includes also Savvas Xiros.

An important factor in the managing strategy of SYRIZA beyond what we have mentioned was the provocation concerning the solidarity movement, mainly the means that are friendly to it. Especially after the occupation of the radio station "Kokkino", the line of the media that support the government was that the comrades in solidarity, deliberately or not, were operating provocatively in favour of the "lenders and Merkel and put serious obstacles in the negotiations with the Europeans". The peak came with the anarchist raid into the courtyard of the parliament with statements of first class executives and members of SYRIZA speaking directly of "agents of foreign interests". The leftist regime, just like SYRIZA, always thought that it is the only power that expresses and defends "popular interests" while it simultaneously swore (and continues to swear) faith to all the institutions of urban democracy that condemn and slander revolutionary practices. From a government point of view at this time it is logical that the means it controls, but also various executives and members of it, resort to the usual provocations, especially in a period where the support of the people is also great.

The attitude of the "conservative" camp

On the antipode of SYRIZA we had a massive coming together of the conservative camp with New Democracy obviously as frontman and the first serious political debate on the central political scene since the elections. With its strategy New Democracy sought to delay the procedure as much as possible, hoping that if we had a dead hunger striker, a leftist government would not stand. At the same time it aimed at the "wealthy" conservative audience that thrives in Greek society, of which an important part of ex-voters of the right wing have turned to alternative choices i.e. [the nazi] "Golden Dawn" because of the increasing economic misery. New Democracy, with its choices in the economic sector these last years, does not have many "cards" left to play other than public order and security. With PASOK and Bobolas' crutch party as worthy companions, they fought the hunger strike with everything they had. With Savvas Xiros and the provision for his release as the spearhead it sought to polarize the situation with a twofold aim, either the legislation would not pass because of the noise that would be created, or we would have the death of a hunger striker because of delays. A main ally in their attempt was the mainstream media. The same media that for decades now belittle and slander revolutionaries, twist armed revolutionary action by distorting its proposals, at this particular time were on the frontline of the camp that countered the strike. Initially, beyond the occupation of the SYRIZA headquarters on the 7th day, they chose the usual path of COMPLETE concealment. A crucial point that changed

the facts, therefore the media attitude as well, were the continuous actions of the comrades in solidarity. The occupation of the Rectorship building and Law School (with all its problems), the raid into the courtyard of the parliament, the clashes with riot cops, arson attacks and many other actions in all cities, brought the struggle into the spotlight, resulting in a perfect cooperation between the Media, N.D., PASOK, and Potami, who went on the counter-attack.

Every day, from political shows to news reports, we saw executives and MPs of the above parties, mainly N.D., together with journalists, preaching the “unyielding struggle” against the terrorism and simultaneously to the continuous occupation of the Rectorship in the background, presenting a situation of “catalysts of disorder” by the anti-authoritarians which definitely did not correspond to reality. We had had occupations, clashes and attacks in the past also. Nikos Romanos’ hunger strike is still very recent. In that specific struggle there were many more occupations, generalized clashes with repression units, and it had ended with the amendment of New Democracy minister of Justice Athanasiou satisfying the comrade’s demand. However, the terror lust expressed by the mainstream media and the political parties in this last strike were unprecedented. Even relatively “common” actions, such as the gathering at the Unknown Soldier statue outside parliament or the slogans written on the walls outside parliament took serious dimensions through the distorting lens of the media.

At the same time, as though there were no other demands, unfortunately the debate on the main political scene was centred on the question of releasing Savvas Xiros. We saw it all. Known “TV clowns” making libels against the release of the “murderer”, the media going wild about the “scandalous amendment”, even relatives of victims of terrorism were mobilized in order to polarize the climate. Of course, a major role in this was the fearful attitude of the SYRIZA government trying to balance things as on one hand it had the pressures caused by the strike and the comrades in solidarity, and on the other the continuous reactions of the conservative camp, as well as the government of the USA who with its raw intervention clarified that “the release of terrorists will not be a friendly action”.

The final outcome of the struggle

With this climate of war we reached the parliamentary committees and the “dead” week of the Easter break. Following the meetings, it was clear that N.D. was attempting to delay the vote so that there would be issues with the strike and that SYRIZA was attempting to show that it was not receiving any pressure from anywhere but was bringing in legislation that was included in their pre-election commitments. At this point we took the tough decision to continue the struggle until the legislation was voted in.

Here we would like to open a small parenthesis (since we will analyse it extensively later) about the lack of solidarity expressed during the strike. Despite the really praiseworthy attempts of a significant nucleus of comrades, the solidarity movement was at a level that did not correspond to the specific struggle. Despite its initial problems, which played a role and which we have also exposed in our text, the level of the struggle was widened to concern the entire repressive framework of the last 15 years, and touched the entire movement. Therefore at the level of clashes, since the other camp was attacking us so fiercely, we were not up to the circumstances. Once again disputes crept in, personal differences, intrigues. Despite the coming together of the conservative camp, the terror-lust of the media, the obvious retreat of the government, therefore also the emerging crack in the exclusion regime, solidarity all during the strike remained disconnected and uncoordinated. Despite the attempt of some comrades to connect the struggle with others, such as that in Skouries [*against the gold mine*], there were no tangible results. At the same time, compared to the size and level of the struggle, the solidarity actions can be described as limited and definitely did not rise to the occasion. Despite all this, it still is the first (for now) serious struggle against the leftist management of the State machinery that left serious wounds on the governmental formation. The humanistic and alleged militant façade of SYRIZA cracked every day until it shattered completely when the riot cops (MAT) raided the occupied Rectorship building.

What separates the occupation of the Rectorship building in the centre of Athens from other equally important actions that took place in other cities was that it was highlighted by the State as the core-symbol of the struggle outside the walls. On a propagandistic level the repression of the occupation was highly symbolic. After 19 days and after the tough and crucial period of Easter when the occupiers kept the flame alight rising to the occasions, came the final repressive act. April 17th, the day the State proceeded to evict the occupation was the day of the voting of the legislation, which as it seemed would cover part of the demands of the strikers and the fighters outside the walls. With the intensification of repression the coalition government passed a double message:

First of all it showed the deep State and the far right gang that when going against revolutionaries they are in the same camp. Secondly it made it clear to its leftist base (i.e. SYRIZA youth) and sympathizers how little their opinion counts.

From the first days there was an attempt to cover up the struggle that began on March 2nd. Later, after the moves of those outside the walls and the increasingly crucial situation of the strikers broke the wall of silence, authority withheld, distorted and ridiculed the struggle's characteristics aiming at its isolation and finally its more effective repression. In the text that announced the hunger strike but also in later texts (19/3 and 1/4), we mentioned the deterioration war, the promises, the many statements and negated deadlines, as tactics of the State. All during the

struggle and especially towards the end of it, these tactics were confirmed more and more. With our announcement on 11/4 we clarified for the last time that we would not end the strike until the final voting of the whole initial outline of the demands, since things were quite loose until that moment. During those days, we, the comrades of the Network were called to make the important decision of whether to continue or end the struggle. Some characteristics of the struggle were highlighted, as well as the general stance of the leftist management of the political current events. The qualitative nature of the coalition was hypocrisy, amateurism and fraud, which we had expected on different levels. The decreased dynamic of the movement on the other hand, was something we had not expected. Simultaneously, the health of the strikers was at a crucial point and the dead period of Easter was ahead of us. Then, we weighed up the facts and mainly considering the degree to which we would attain our demands and maintain coherence with our means of struggle, we chose to continue, knowing full well that our decision would extend the great discrepancy of the struggle both inside and outside the walls. The Easter holiday period was the most dangerous and nerve-wracking for the strikers and pushed the comrades outside the walls to the limit of their possibilities.

From the start, the government obstructed the deposition of the legislation while promising the satisfaction of the strikers, with the interrupting of the struggle as their obvious target. They even had the nerve to publicly ask for that twice, making promises in exchange. In the initial drawing-up of the legislation the abolishment of the legal outline of C'type prisons was included and Savvas Xiros's release was secured. Later, despite the objections of Minister Paraskevopoulos, the amendments concerning the DNA and the hood-law were added to the legislation. The amendments were finally added on the 47th day (of the hunger strike), in the final vote for legislation in the Parliament Plenary.

Here, we would like to clarify that the dates of depositing and voting the legislation were postponed from week to week up until the last minute. The—up until a few months ago—leftist defenders of “human rights”, took on the role of torturing the hunger strikers, just like their predecessors. However, the tactic of a tough stance against the strikers, aligned with the dictates of the domestic political and economic elite and strengthened by the indifference of the leftist base, was carried out with such amateurism that combined with the plans of the deep State, it almost led to the death of a hunger striker. We mean the the case of anarchist Nikolopoulos. This event was not enough to stop the government continuing the same tactic, postponing the voting of the legislation to after Easter, risking the life of the strikers who continued through the dead period for legislative (and movement) procedures. It is obvious that it was hoping for the ending of the hunger strike and the ceasing of solidarity actions so the path could open for the satisfying of the least the possible demands. Thus we got to April 17th when the laws that partly covered

the demands were voted in under the pressure of the struggle. The next day after a joint decision of the participants we decided to end the hunger strike. After the voting in of the Parliament Plenary, we considered that the demands had been satisfied and vested to a point and the struggle had now also reached the limits of its dynamic. However, let it be known that despite the fact that the situation was extreme in every aspect (the health of the strikers, movement processes, prospects, strength of the state), the possibility of continuing towards the satisfaction of other demands remained open up to the last moment.

Particularities of the struggle

The hunger strike that has just ended puts us in a position of beginning the procedure of assessment. We were already of the opinion that any assessment attempted at this specific moment would basically be lacking. A more complete and calmer assessment is a job that will take years, since the “leftovers” of the strike and the matters it opened will beset us for years, personally and collectively. However, the analysis of the experience offered to us by the deposition of our frame of thought, the co-formulation with other political prisoners (to the minimal degree that it existed) and mainly our participation in the strike, is the step that we must take in order to reach more complete conclusions in the future. What makes this specific struggle special—besides the particular characteristics while it was being conducted—is the great wealth of conclusions we take away from it, and on many levels as well.

We learned a lot about the fantasy subject of political prisoners—including ourselves—about the formation of our space in a specific experience, about the new façade of State-capitalist management with which we clashed, the strength, the limits and contradictions of all sides involved. The fact that the conclusions we have drawn from it are so multi-sided, is due to the nature of this specific hunger strike itself. It was the first hunger strike since the junta that placed the clash with the core of repression condensed into the special exclusion regime, as a concept with which every individual or collective subject who disrupts the equilibrium of the system is dealt with. We fought against an expression of the exclusion regime and our struggle caused some cracks. This is what made this strike so dreaded for power and made it attempt to conceal and distort it in every way. The fact that demands cannot be personalized (except for the demand for Savvas Xiros which we will analyse further on) and that “justified” bourgeois-democratic amenities made the strike non-manageable politically, communicational, even ethically. Exactly because it was not assimilated, it deprived our struggle of a great degree of social acceptance. On the other hand, however, it permitted the drawing of clear conclusions. It was the first—and only up till now—acute procedure of clashing

with the anarchist/anti-authoritarian movement after the newly elected coalition SYRIZA-ANEL. The conception of our frame of thought as it was developed and finally communicated to the political prisoners in the C'type prisons, presupposed the electoral victory of SYRIZA with self-reliance. Or with a majority. The development and the final achievements of the strike showed that our frame of thought was correct at its base, although there were some omissions that played their role:

-The underestimation of the reactions concerning the matter of Savvas Xiros stirred up by the conservative camp, was a parametre that we should have foreseen and analysed more. It was the demand that brought the conservative camp together and the clash around it overshadowed the remainder of our demands. Speaking self-critically, we accepted the demand when it was proposed because we considered it ethically and politically right. In hindsight, we realized that we should have predicted the centrality it acquired. The personal involvement of major scumbags, whether obvious (Bakogianni, Momferatos etc.), or not so obvious (Vardinogiannis etc) and the pressure from the USA were factors we did not take into account to the degree we should have. Because of the central position the demand acquired in the public debate, we lost the opportunity to focus on other demands, such as the "hood law", DNA or even law 187A, and transfer the weight there. After the refusal of Xiros to accept the "bracelet" for religious reasons, the positive importance of the conquest remains for humanistic reasons, as well as for anyone who might have the misfortune to find themselves in Xiros's position. Something we must stress here is that repression also connects the thread of moments in the social war. The "bracelet" came to give the solution to Xiros's matter also because before that it had already been proposed as the solution to N.Romanos's hunger strike. It is important to realize that every battle we give leaves positive or negative effects in the depth of time.

-We also underestimated the inexperience of SYRIZA managing such situations from a government position. Opposition crowns are different from government responsibility that must give solutions, especially when on the one hand a hunger strike is pressuring with whatever that entails and on the other the liberal/far-right lobby is asking for blood in the arena. Inexperience and diffidence can become murderous under conditions of pressure, and 48 days of hunger strike testify this.

The goal setting of the strike

The triple goal setting of the strike (tactical, strategic, political), imposes the need of individual references to each parameter:

Tactically, the hunger strike ended with the partial satisfaction of the demands we had set.

Analytically:

- a) The legal framework that defined the operation of the C'type prisons was completely abolished.
- b) The aggravating provision of the "hood law" for those arrested in clashes and protests was abolished. As for expropriations, the provision remained, however, not as a separate charge but as an individual feature of the robbery. Therefore, in robbery cases as well sentences will start from a lower base.
- c) Access to non-police specialists at all stages of the processing of genetic material became feasible, from extraction up to the final report. The specialist will compose his own report and will testify in court. The prosecution provision that imposed the violent extraction of DNA was transformed into something vague that maintains the compulsory extraction of genetic material "with respect to human dignity". Practically, therefore, it does not seem that anything will change in this matter.
- d) Savvas Xiros could remain under house arrest for the rest of his sentence, something he chose not to accept because of the electronic surveillance.

Concerning the other demands (abolishment of articles 187 and 187A, and the non-analysis of DNA mixtures of more than two people) there was no change.

In conclusion, besides the abolishing of the legal framework for the C'type prisons—which were also a pre-election announcement of SYRIZA—and the presence of a specialist for the DNA, some demands were partly achieved, others not at all. Therefore, we are speaking of partial success concerning tactical aims. The coalition tried to the end to avoid the complete satisfaction of even those minimal demands. In two cases it was pressure from the strike that changed the course of events. At some point before the deposition of the legislation to the committee, they added a provision that left the decision of house arrest for those doing life sentences with 80% disability or more to the judicial council. Any prospect of release for Savvas Xiros would therefore automatically disappear. It was SYRIZAS' gift to the right-wing audience (including AN.EL) in order to settle the fuss concerning the release of Savvas Xiros.

Also, in the final vote in the Plenum of Parliament, Paraskeyopoulos did not initially accept the amendment of DNA. In both cases we stated to a representative of the Ministry, that the hunger strike would continue if first of all the provision concerning the judicial council was not removed and secondly if the amendment for the DNA was not accepted, something we meant of course. If the hunger strike had not begun, even the pre-election announcement about the C'type prisons might have not materialized. If we had not continued the pressure of the hunger strike up to the final vote, SYRIZA could have very easily, as the conclusion showed, retreated on the final stage and even the minimum would not have been conquered. Therefore, there was every reason to continue since to have trusted the government that things were underway would be have been destructive. And something

we must not forget is that we are referring to a relief of the legal framework, something that is easily diverted to reformism if the necessary organization and composition does not exist, so that any legal “ground” gained can be used for additional development of forces and struggles. Our strategic targets concerned the linking of the political prisoners but also the wider forces of the movement, so that a base for a more effective connection between the “inside” and “outside” could be set.

The strike would be the means of connecting people and perceptions for upgrading of the movement into a residual movement that together with its hostages would be able to analyse the junctures and speed up some—short term at least—targets. Although the political targets were partially reached, strategically we are speaking of a complete failure, as this connection sounds like a joke since the strike ended. In order to analyse the reasons of our non-coming together as a movement in order to carry out this battle in favourable conditions, we must appreciate the general social situation. The expectancy from “hope” has still not settled, the logic of delegating dominates socially and is faulty in an area placed between the anarchist/antiauthoritarian space and alternative selfmanaged institutions. If we perceive that the electoral victory of SYRIZA was the defeat of the Movements of disobedience and dispute, it is easy to identify a great question that we will be called to deal with in the future. The citation of viable proposals that will transcend the logic of delegating.

Coming to the presence of the hunger strike therefore, we realized that besides the more nuclear part that comprises the “space”, the rest of the “progressive” social areas saw the strike as an attack on the reliability of the government. The logic “if SYRIZA is positive, why are they striking?”, could obviously not overcome the main movement (no matter how much someone means that) value of not trusting institutional factors. The communicational concealment of the strike extended this situation. From the moment the spectacle society defines events according to their spectacular depiction, whatever is not projected simply does not exist. This deprived the social grounding of the incident, preventing the engagement of more people. The two above matters (also) involve the clumsy beginning of the hunger strike, without any substantial information to the comrades outside the walls.

Better communication with comrades experiencing the social climate would possibly also have helped us to understand reality, which we cannot wholly perceive because we are in prison. Therefore we would have understood the limits of our approach in advance, weighing things up better. The hurried start is only partly an excuse for the non-coming together of the movement. After the second week we believe there was not one anarchist who did not know about the strike, having prepared at least a short term plan. Besides, unfortunately the announcement of a hunger strike by a comrade is usually done by surprise. Despite all this we believe that the way a project begins defines its development to a large degree. That

is why as DAK we insisted on internal information so much, that is why we sent an internal text to collectives, asking for it to be passed around, seeking to share the frame of thought of the strike with comrades in solidarity even retrospectively. However, good intentions are not enough, the blackmailing attitude of the political prisoners of the C'type prisons for an immediate start of the strike deprived our struggle of a qualitative leap. The blackmailing about the start of the strike due to political myopia and hurrying, led us to realize that the chaotic nature of the "butterfly effect" does not only apply in physics but also in social engineering.

A hunger strike that started from a non-anarchist prisoner led to the biggest, post-dictatorship, hunger strike. Even if the abolishing of the C'type prisons had been accomplished with G. Sofianidis' hunger strike, it would have offered us a better starting point for the claiming of the rest of the demands in a few weeks and with better terms, without there being any reason for a hurried start. However, the two main shortcomings we have identified have to do with differences in perception, betraying political immaturity. The perception by part of the movement that it is unnecessary to deal with issues unrelated to general social interest, co-defines us, severely limiting our field of action. Our position as anarchists places us in the front line of battle and surely there are issues that have special weight for us, such as that of repression. Since we promote the clash with authority we need to defend the losses of this struggle.

Armed struggle is part of our battle and the underlying (or sometimes clear) concept that because the hunger strike is carried out by members or accused of participation in armed organizations, it cannot be spread socially, simply entrenches us. It is an issue that needs extensive analysis and our reference to it ends here. The ideologisation of expressing solidarity based on personal relations, likes or dislikes is another issue. The fact that although we placed as demands in the strike some "flags" of our movement for many years now, demands that link anarchists against repression, the insertion or withdrawal of comrades in solidarity according to their own personal preferences just leaves a sad impression. We cannot but characterize as politically immature the attitude of people who perceive hunger strike as simply a clash of specific political prisoners with the State. Every strike, and this one much more, goes beyond the strikers, their demands, even the solidarity movement, placing the more general issues of the clash, demanding that the socially active take a position. And inactivity according to preference is also a position. Here it's worth mentioning the specificity of the conjectural participation of the CCF in the hunger strike, within their own context. During the organization of the strike we as DAK had chosen not to address them because of their general problematic behaviour, towards us as well as the movement. Behaviour reaching hostility automatically placed them outside our frame of values. However, since

they announced the beginning of their hunger strike, our support was a one way route.

We have the maturity to realize that the imprisonment of relatives goes beyond our personal relationships and concerns every individual in struggle. There could be partial critiques as to the starting time (while another strike had already begun and a separate although connected frame had been placed) or the personification of their demands while there was a more general struggle against law 187 that criminalizes relationships, but that is not essential. We consider however, that the abandoning to the repression of whoever the regime considers an enemy is a crucial mistake in analysis, simply because the State gains the ground that we lose. A last factor we identify concerning the inadequate linking (and demands of such a struggle) of a wider solidarity movement, is the non-linking of political prisoners. The image of miscommunication, if not dissolution, deriving from three different strikes going on with three political contexts and gradual departures of strikers, surely cannot link comrades, whereas it creates conditions to provide scope for levelling and disappointment. And, of course the main consequence of this is the concession of “territory” to the enemy. The coalition, seeing that their retractions worked, carried out an even more intense war of deterioration after the 30 days, counting on our exhaustion as well as the dead period over Easter. If our proposition for a gradual entry of strikers, depending on each one’s physical situation, had been followed by all the participants, the culmination for all would come more or less at the same time (also taking into consideration the unexpected complications that always exist in such situations) and the government would be in a tough position because of the immense pressure from the crucial situation of so many political prisoners on hunger strike. But since it was not raised realistically, there was no claim by any striker to follow a joint plan. Since three clear contexts were placed, each one had the opportunity to end the hunger strike whenever they were overcome by developments both ethically and politically. There were comrades in our collective who did not participate in the strike because of health issues from older hunger strikes, or by choice. Also, Tasos Theofilou ended his hunger strike after 38 days, after the legislation was deposited to the committee. We have explained that the structure and conformation of DAK is based on the initiative and minimal common agreements and this collective is not a group.

A hunger strike is a tough self-destructive means and we think that it needs flexibility against the limitations and dead-ends by each individual that decides to carry it out. No matter how many questions we might go into, we remain people with limitations, contradictions and weaknesses. Within this frame of thought there was no critique from our side of those who stopped the strike before the final voting, whether they participated in DAK or not. The only exception is the text by Nikos Maziotis, who publicly mentioned that “the struggle has ended, completing

its circle". This was of course not the case when nine anarchists were continuing the hunger strike. Even if this was someone's opinion, it could have been held back until the procedure of assessment, which would not be far off anyway. Additionally, the reference concerning the "lack of realism" of the demands to abolish articles 187 and 187A, fortified SYRIZA behind its own red lines, exposing the other strikers. The realism of the demands is a matter of organization and decisiveness. Even if they are incomplete, it is better for the expression of opinions to take place at a dead time and not in the midst of the clash. Independently of intentions therefore, the termination announcement of N.Maziotis was undermining, and this is what our reference was about.

The mentioning by a hunger striker that a struggle has been completed while many other strikers are still continuing, affects the comrades in solidarity directly, creating confusion. Since there was no programming, intentions or plan-b for other actions, it would have been a huge mistake to abandon the Rectorship, since it was the only steady source of counter-information in Athens. Besides the political importance of the occupation (and there are definitely many analyses), its communicational importance was huge. It was the centre field of conflict at the last stage of the strike and finally the coalition was forced to invade in order to vote in the legislation without the pressure of the occupation. The whole repressive management and the total eviction of the occupied Rectorship created a deep crack in the "movement" façade of SYRIZA. Finally, despite the complete failure to accomplish our strategic targets (that is, the linking of political prisoners and comrades outside the walls), the development of the strike offers us conclusions whose calm evaluation in time will turn out positively. The political targets of our struggle were also partly accomplished. A short term clash between the more radical social part and the alternative system proposal of management separated these two to a great degree. This is the main accomplishment of the strike.

It was clear that a part of the anarchist/anti-authoritarian area, whether due to political naivety or because they thought SYRIZA was a strategic ally for buying time, considered that the clash with SYRIZA should have been delayed or even postponed. The hunger strike once again showed the way in which conquests are achieved under the spotlight. When we clash without mediation and our targets are non-manageable by the regime. We also saw the extent and ability of our social intervention without the "crutches" of the left regime. For years now as an area we were "comfortable" with SYRIZA's opposition role, who while socially grounding our demands in such cases, simultaneously de-politicized them. Through this hunger strike the repressive attack of the last 15 years was not only dealt with legally (see tactical targets), but also politically. We were given an opportunity to palpate the exclusion regime, analyse the developing mechanisms of power at the level of repression and to an extent put dents in the sides of the exclusion regime.

If however we omit to analyse our conclusions and persist in simply words of condemnation, nothing guarantees us (on the contrary actually) that a future government (or soon the same government) will not attempt to continue its repressive onslaught. It is imperative that we realize the gaps, deficiencies but also our force when we promote a struggle based exclusively on our strength. The hunger strike is small step so we can count our forces and process plans of restructuring towards a revolutionary direction. The struggle we carried out was clearly a political one. It affected its vanguard—the imprisoned strikers—as much as it affected the comrades outside prison.

Its limits, the contradictions it highlighted, the different social dynamics that appeared in its path were unexpected variables or were calculated during the preparation. The environment within which the hunger strike was born and treaded was very different from the one that existed up to then. The analyses we made from the start concerning the outcome of the struggle were made from the facts of correlations of strength that we had (or thought we had) up to that moment. Generally we could palpate the differences with the past but that was not enough. The analysis of such a struggle needs to deepen more than generalise the truth that “all bosses are the same, left or right”. A correct, as possible, a prediction must be based on tested models, some facts which in our case were impossible to know without the existence of the struggle.

Only an analysis that steps on real facts can define (always taking into consideration the unknown factor), whether a struggle will have alternate endings, how realistic the targets it sets are on every level, what the chances of having the expected outcome are. This is the only way the cost can be calculated and whether a battle is worth fighting or not, and if it is, then what is the best plan tactically and strategically. We never had nor we do we have any illusions. SYRIZA is a party that in this period is managing State authority in favour of capitalist profitability, and as far as that goes it is identical with all bourgeois parties of authority. Every mechanism of authority, however, has different starting points and tactics of co-governing and it is our duty as revolutionaries to analyse the enemy and fight our battles with the best terms. The management of the SYRIZA government of the issues opened up by the strike (political, communicational, repressive), of course had differences from similar old experiences. To put it all in the logic “they are all the same” is obviously valid, but it will not withstand serious political analysis, especially during the time that the strike took place (for the reasons we mentioned above). To flatten the differences that exist within the authoritarian camp abolishes critical thought and deprives us of the opportunity to become more relevant in a trench battle, such as a hunger strike. It is a matter of basic political clash and maturity to recognize that what we won with the strike was not the greatest, it

was not even what we had calculated, but who thought that we would even have won that with different correlations?

Would New Democracy have withdrawn the legislation for the C' type prisons which it created a year ago, would they have set conditions for releasing Savvas Xiros, would they have abolished the hood-law they themselves had voted in, if there was even greater danger for the life of a hunger striker? And just so that there is no misunderstanding, we do not wait for more lenient times in order to fight our battles. The hunger strikes carried out by K.Sakkas, N.Romanos, SP.Stratoulis, last year's hunger strike of 4,500 prisoners and so many more were battles fought when they had to be fought. Also, many battles might have to be fought in the future in unfavourable conditions. But when we have the opportunity to exploit gaps in the system, in order to promote a strategic target, we do it.

Clear and simple.

The hunger strike of political prisoners was a great battle within the liberation war we are carrying out. Great not only because of the length of time, participation or its stakes, but —and mainly—because of conclusions derived. This great battle was fought now because many smaller battles were not fought earlier. The short hunger strike of 4,500 prisoners in the summer, the hunger strike of the prisoners in Manadrinou prison in 2004 against the wretched conditions of the first high security prison in Greece, the hunger strikes and revolts of immigrants in the concentration camps and many more other moments of struggle placed some foundations against the exclusion regime and the last hunger strike takes its place on the mosaic which composes the struggles against State-capitalist construct. An issue that the hunger strike of the political prisoners leaves as a legacy, is to transform any conquests (legal, perceptual, interpersonal, and political), giving them a revolutionary stamp. How we will rework the mistakes, omissions and gaps we found in order to become more effective and dangerous for power. SYRIZA, as a government as well as a party exhausted its vested time and along with it the delusions of a large part of the people who assigned their hopes to them. The hunger strike and the actions in solidarity forced SYRIZA to reveal its repressive nature and this procedure will continue in many individual issues, highlighting its contradictions. This is why as a movement we must prepare by analysing situations, realizing the opportunity and being ready to intensify these contradictions with radical ideas and subversive acts. If this does not happen, the management of SYRIZA, partially assimilative, partially disruptive, and partially repressive, will be a serious brake to the development of anarchist proposals.

THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE WAR IS IN OUR HANDS — LET'S PREPARE FOR THE BATTLES THAT ARE COMING

Network of Fighting Prisoners (DAK)

P.S.1 The few anxiously awaiting critical evaluation from our side in order to feed their own intrigues, should look elsewhere to satisfy their cannibal instincts.

P.S.2 The present evaluation does not claim infallibility, nor that it has the last word. It is only the point of view of those who participate in DAK and is a part of the overall process of evaluation of the movement in the struggle we fought. We tried, despite the difficulty of communication between the prisons and through this period of recuperation of the hunger strike, to cover this so versatile issue of struggle, as soon as possible, and co-formulate on the fertile self-critique that must be completed before this struggle becomes prehistoric. Therefore, now that it is still fresh, we must draw the first conclusions, since history runs at a fast pace and the new battlefronts are already present. Clarification or comments from comrades about issues we have omitted or that we intentionally or unintentionally did not analyse, can be bidirectional. Further information or propositions concerning the strategy and tactic that was chosen are issues that do not concern the public sphere but our internal processes, and this is how they will be communicated.

P.S.3 A big hug and all our love to the three doctors Lina Bergopoulou, Spiros Sakkas and Olga Kosmopoulou who from the first moment were by our side and supported us.

P.S.4 Again a big hug to the political prisoners from Turkey who went on hunger strike by our side. These fighters who are examples of modesty and effectiveness, showed their political maturity, leaving aside important but simultaneously insubstantial ideological differences before our common enemy, and risked their lives for the battle we fought. We cannot forget also Giorgos Iglesias, who for 35 days participated in the hunger strike, being the only essential support from the side of the prisoners.

P.S.5 A special mention to the comrades who acted in the rural areas. Let's not forget that 70% of the solidarity acts took place outside of Athens.

Library.Anarhija.Net



Network of Combative Prisoners (DAK)
Analysis of a Hunger Strike 2015 in Greece
December 18, 2015

actforfree.nostate.net

lib.anarhija.net