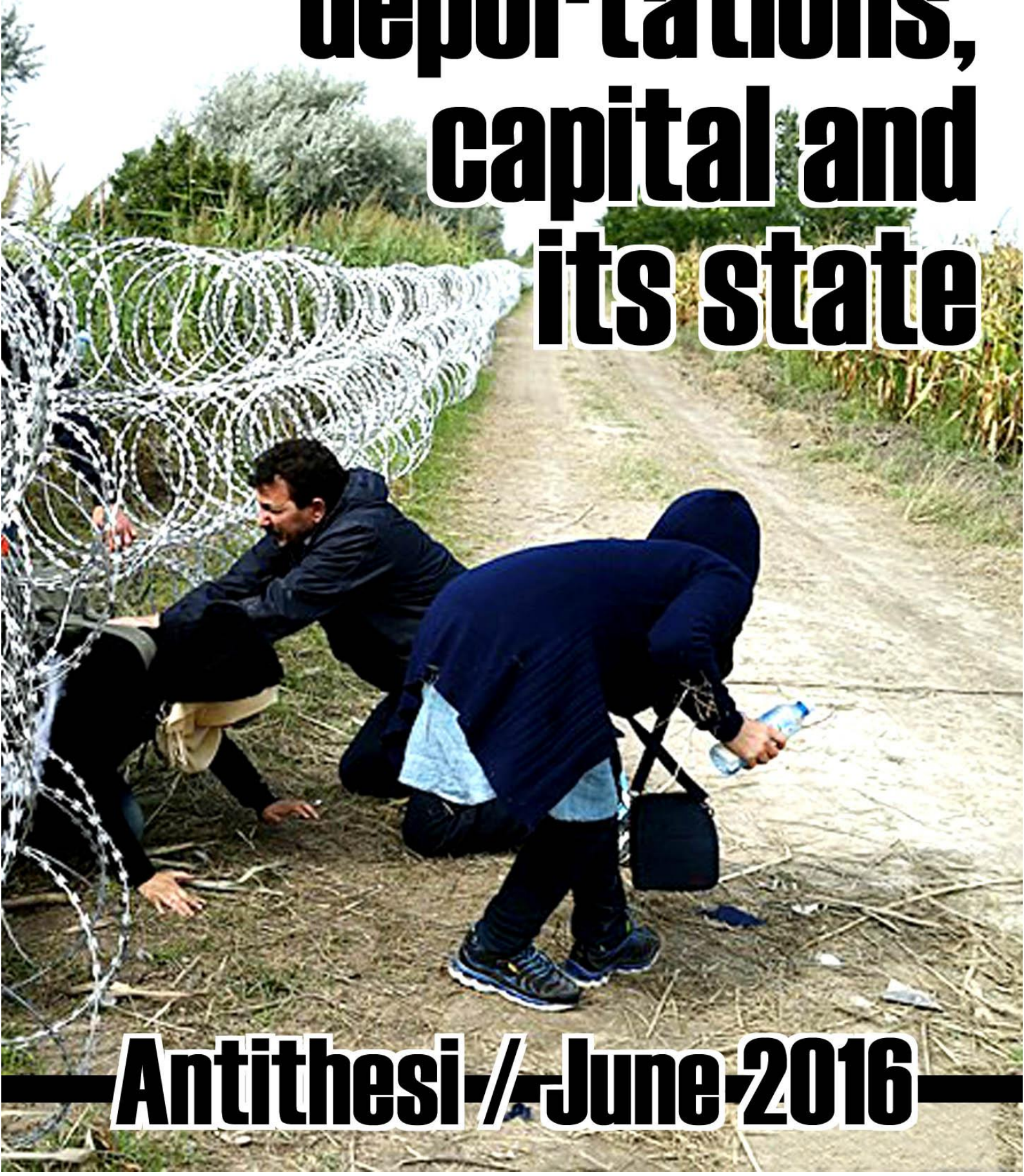


# Migration, deportations, capital and its state



**Antithesi // June 2016**



## **Vogelfrei. Migration, deportations, capital and its state**

This text aims at contributing to the analysis and critique of the politics of the EU and the Greek state on the control and biopolitical management of migration from a proletarian standpoint. The great increase of the migration movement towards the European Union during the last two years, which was mainly caused by the intensification of the military conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, has been confronted on the one hand with an intensification of border policing up to the point of its militarization and on the other hand with the formation of a new political and legal framework through the agreement between EU and Turkey on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March of 2016 which negates basic principles of the international asylum law. Our interest in the issue of migration as a form of the international mobility of labour, as a form of permanent primitive accumulation and as a form of autonomous proletarian activity is not academic. On the contrary, we seek to equip ourselves with theoretical instruments which may be proven useful for the development of common struggles of local and immigrant proletarians, as an integral part of the **class antagonistic** movement against capital and its state.

### **The crisis of reproduction of capitalist social relations and the “refugee crisis”**

We start from the presentation of certain basic banalities with regard to the issue of migration in Greece. Already from the early 1990s Greece had been transformed from a departure country to a host country of migration. Till the end of the previous decade most of the immigrants came from the former state capitalist countries, and primarily from Albania. It is estimated that during the previous ten years (from 2006 till 2015) 1.800.000 undocumented immigrants crossed the Greek borders and that 175.000 of them were deported.<sup>1</sup> However, the character of immigration to Greece radically changed after the outbreak of the economic recession in 2009 which is still continuing and constitutes the main expression of the deep crisis of reproduction of capitalist social relations in Greece. Fewer and fewer immigrants enter Greece after 2010 with the expectation to find a job and stay in the country, as it was in the period of capitalist growth in Greece. On the contrary, nowadays most of the immigrants cross the Greek borders in order to continue their journey towards other EU countries, and primarily towards countries of the European North. Further, most of the immigrants entering Greece come from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the countries of the Maghreb. They flee from the everyday violence and death of imperialist interventions and civil wars, i.e. the extreme forms of constant and variable capital destruction and of primitive accumulation which are necessary for the reproduction of capitalist social relations on a global scale. Only in Syria, more than 350.000 people were killed after the outbreak of the civil war. It is estimated that since the beginning of 2015 about 1.000.000 undocumented immigrants crossed the Greek borders whereas at least

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<sup>1</sup> During that period, most of the deported immigrants were also of Albanian origin.



1.200 of them drowned in the Mediterranean according to the data of the International Organization of Migration.<sup>2</sup>

These data clearly show that it is not the first time that so many immigrants enter Greece. The main difference with the past is the inability of Greek capital to use this labour power in order to increase its profitability and expand its reproduction, in the context of the reduction of the total fixed capital in Greece.<sup>3</sup> In this historical conjuncture immigrants cannot be used by the Greek capitalist state in order to promote the restructuring of the labour market, the broadening of the divisions within the working class and the increase of the rate of exploitation. In a country with 25% unemployment, the new immigrant population is redundant for capital. Of course, immigrants are aware of that and that's why they seek to leave Greece and move towards other European countries by any means available.

This is the main reason why the Greek state and the Greek media started to use the term "refugees" and to introduce the discourse of the existence of a "refugee crisis" or a "humanitarian crisis", (partially) abandoning, thus, the discourses of "illegal immigration", "immigrant crisis", etc. which are negatively loaded as concepts. As Marx had eloquently written in *Capital* about the "*sediment of the relative surplus population*" which "*dwells in the sphere of pauperism*", "*pauperism forms a condition of capitalist production, and of the capitalist development of wealth. It forms part of the faux frais of capitalist production: but capital usually knows how to transfer these from its own shoulders to those of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie*".<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the main issue for the capitalist state was to find a way **to transfer the cost from the shoulders of capital to the shoulders of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie**. In this direction the state formulated a discourse that would enable it to control and assimilate the spontaneous gestures and acts of solidarity towards the immigrants and to transform them into charity managed by the state authorities and the NGOs.<sup>5</sup> The aim of the left government of SYRIZA which directs during

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<sup>2</sup> See: <http://missingmigrants.iom.int>

<sup>3</sup> I. Ioakeimoglou, a Greek Marxist analyst, mentions that total fixed capital in Greece (machinery, production buildings, roads, ports, etc.) has been reduced between 2010 and 2016 by 8.2% according to the data of the European Commission. This figure is bigger than the reduction of total fixed capital in France and Italy during World War 2 (respectively 8% and 7%).

<sup>4</sup> K. Marx, *Capital, volume I*, p. 797, Penguin, 1976. This position of Marx is only partially correct since the expenses for the pauperized surplus population are productive for capital. A significant number of small and big capitalist enterprises including food and basic necessities producers, translation agencies, construction companies that build detention centers, mobile operators, etc. have increased their turnover and their profits due to the absorption of the increased demand brought by the immigrant money, the expenses of workers and other people providing aid, by the state expenses and by the emergency financial aid given by the EU. Further, several retail shops and other small businesses (hotels, taxis, etc.) have swindled the money carried by the immigrants (there have been many reports of exorbitant prices asked by retail shops, taxis and hotels from the immigrants). Since the beginning of 2015, the Greek state has received by the EU 237 million euros as emergency financial aid. The greatest part of this sum was given to the NGOs and from there to various other charitable capitalist enterprises...

<sup>5</sup> The text "Migration, Refugees and Labour" by Wildcat ([http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/wildcat/99/e\\_w99\\_migration.html](http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/wildcat/99/e_w99_migration.html)) describes the tactics followed by the German state during last summer when Merkel proclaimed a "culture of welcoming", which are similar to how SYRIZA's government managed the situation in Greece, albeit in totally different economic conditions.

this period the capitalist state has been to prevent the possibility for the development of relations of struggle between local proletarians and immigrants which could evolve, for example, into a mass expropriation / squatting movement for the satisfaction of common needs. Instead of that, the state promoted the provision of assistance in kind by the local working and middle classes, under the supervision of the authorities and the NGOs. The goods are collected within state and NGOs warehouses to be distributed in the so called “hospitality centers” (which in fact are surveillance, social isolation and –often– detention centers) in order to achieve the transfer of cost which was described previously. This attempt started very early, in August 2015, when the makeshift camp that had been set up by the immigrants in Areos park, a park in the center of Athens, was evacuated and the immigrants were transferred to the first “hospitality center” that was established, which is situated in Eleonas, a relatively isolated suburb of Athens. The statements made at that time in an interview taken by the Efsyn newspaper by T. Christodolopoulou, then Minister of Migration Policy, are very revealing: *“at Areos park a humanitarian crisis is unfolding”, “the government of SYRIZA helped the withdrawal of the term ‘illegal immigrant’ from the public discourse”*.<sup>6</sup>

### **Disciplining and controlling migration: techniques and ideology. Inclusion and Exclusion**

In the same interview, the former minister stated also that SYRIZA convinced *“society about the difference between refugees and immigrants”*. This statement clearly expresses the fact that the emergence of the figure of the “refugee” in the public sphere and its distinction from the figure of the immigrant is also a technique for the separation, the control and disciplining of immigrants as well as their evaluation and selection as labour power. The hypocritical magnanimity towards the refugees has been coupled with the call for the speedy expulsion of the undesirable undocumented immigrants. Of course, the separation between immigrants and refugees is enacted by each state according to a political decision and there is nothing objective to it. For example, in 2015 the German state stopped recognizing the status of “refugee” for the great majority of the Afghan immigrants, despite the fact that they come from a country where war has never stopped the last 15 years. The German Minister of Interior Thomas de Maizi re stated in October 2015 that large amounts of development aid have gone to Afghanistan and, therefore, that the German government *“expects that Afghans [will] stay in their country”*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The fact that the evacuation of Areos park did not face significant resistance and that the logic of charity prevailed has also to do, to a certain extent, with the content of the spontaneous solidarity activities. Most of the people participating in such activities did not put forward from the beginning the issue of the expropriation of the capitalist property for the satisfaction of food and housing needs. On the contrary, most of the people limited their activity to collect and organize the distribution of relief goods. Of course, the collection and distribution of relief goods is necessary in the beginning for the satisfaction of immediate needs. However, a clear line of demarcation should be drawn immediately between the class position on the struggle vis-a-vis NGOs, the state and the various offshoots of the left of capital.

<sup>7</sup> T. Beaty και K. Surana, *Afghan refugees receive a cold welcome in Europe*, Quartz, <http://qz.com/568717/afghan-refugees-receive-a-cold-welcome-in-europe/>.

Moreover, the distinction in international law between refugees and immigrants is baseless in itself. On the one hand, “refugees” are not victims, are not passive objects of others’ pity and compassion as they are usually presented within the dominant spectacle. They remain subjects making choices for their life despite the dispossession of their condition. In this respect, they are not different from immigrants as they are legally defined. On the other hand, most of the times, immigrants flee from the social and political conditions of their country of origin which are for them intolerable. They escape from poverty, from forms of structural violence and deprivation, from established sex and religion hierarchies which oppress them. In this sense, they are different from “refugees” only in the degree of the violence incurred to them within the specific form of capitalist social relations prevailing in the country they depart from. For this reason, we use only the term “immigrant” in this text.

**Therefore, the separation of refugees from immigrants functioned as a basic technique of the apparatus for the control of migration** as it was formulated by the Agreement of Schengen, the Agreement of Dublin and the international legislation concerning asylum and deportations. However, as historical developments have shown, the strategies and tactics of border control and enforcement take shape in reaction to the subjectivity and autonomy characterizing the movement of the immigrants which always comes first and is unpredictable. When hundreds of thousands of immigrants crossed the sea borders of EU in the summer of 2015 on boats no stronger than a nutshell, the member-states of EU and the media exploited the hundreds of drowned immigrants (including many children) in order to promote the discourse of “refugee crisis” and “humanitarian tragedy”. This discourse included the denunciation of “human trafficking” which has been presented as “slave trade” and the presentation of the migrants’ movement as a “chaotic and dangerous immigration flow”. This constituted the basis for the militarization of border control which culminated with the sending of NATO naval forces to patrol the Aegean sea.<sup>8</sup> Of course, no word was uttered about the fact that the intensification of the repressive measures against “illegal trafficking” makes border crossing much more difficult and dangerous for immigrants.

A next phase of the ideological operations was the exploitation of the spectacle of the terrorist attack in Paris in order to portray the arrival of immigrants as an “invasion of muslim extremists”, “an invasion of enemies to the European civilization”, even if the perpetrators of the attacks were European citizens. The threat of “foreign fighters who pop in and out of the porous borders of the European Union” became the new scarecrow for the legitimization of the so-called “hot spots”, i.e. the registration, identification and detention centers for undocumented immigrants. A few weeks later, the sexual assaults that had taken place on the New Years’ Eve in Cologne were utilized in order to cultivate a moral panic. The sexual assaults were attributed to Muslims and especially on the undocumented immigrants who were presented as collectively responsible, in order to construct the spectacular figure of the “muslim terrorist / rapist” who “undermines the moral and social order of Europe”.

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the article *Germany soldiers 'to chase' smugglers in EU Mediterranean mission* published on the web site of Deutsche Welle, <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-soldiers-to-chase-smugglers-in-eu-mediterranean-mission/a-18716930>.

Hence, the spectacle of the “refugee – humanitarian crisis”, the spectacle of jihadist terrorism and the moral panic around the sexual assaults in Cologne were used as levers to promote and enforce specific emergency measures on the level of EU, concerning, on the one hand, the reconfiguration of the techniques and tactics of border policing and, on the other hand, the modification and enforcement of a more restrictive legislation on migration and asylum provision.

### “Schengen is dead!” EU – Turkey Agreement

However, the deeper cause for the imposition of the emergency measures and the amendment of the asylum and deportation international legislation which was completed with the signing of the agreement between EU and Turkey on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March of 2016 lies in the failure of the previous regulations (the Schengen and Dublin agreements) to perform their function. And their function was not the hermetic closure of the borders. The borders do not simply aim at the exclusion of immigrants; they are not impenetrable barriers that separate what is “inside” by what is “outside”. Despite the spectacle of the dysfunction and inadequacy of the borders when they are violated, the **borders actually function as filters for the selection of labour power** because they put obstacles (which sometimes are lethal) that sort out the younger, more vigorous and more physically and mentally healthy immigrants, that favour men much more than women and children, that give preferentiality to those who have some money and personal or family resources. For the immigrants who seek a better life in Europe the severe hardships they experience when they cross the borders constitute a harsh endurance test, a preparation for a longer or shorter period of precarious labour and “illegality”. In other words, the borders facilitate the subsumption of the social energy, the vitality, the mobility and the unrest of immigrants under capital, i.e. their disciplining and subordination as variable capital.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the main aim is not to exclude immigrants **but to facilitate their subordinate “illegalized” inclusion into each national social capital and its state.**<sup>10</sup> It is actually a process of primitive accumulation as

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<sup>9</sup> The uncontrolled freedom of movement of proletarians may potentially create big problems for the reproduction of capitalist social relations as it can be used for the *desertion* from particular national regimes of labour’s subordination to capital. That’s why the global mobility of capital necessitates the regulation and restriction of the freedom of movement of proletarians. Ideally, only the disciplined mobility of the commodity labour-power should be permitted according to the changing and fluctuating needs of capitalist accumulation. Of course, the subjectivity and autonomy of the movement of proletarians is always prior to, supersedes and can never be totally subordinated to the valorization of capital. As Nicholas De Genova distinctively points out in his text *“The regime of deportation”, “the freedom of movement supplies a defiant reminder that the creative powers of human life, and the sheer vitality of its productive potential, must always exceed every political regime. The deportation regime, then, reveals itself to be a feckless and frenetic machinery, its rigid and convulsive movements doomed to always present but a tawdry caricature of the human freedom that always precedes it and ever surpasses it”*. Furthermore, the formation and reproduction of the nation state itself as a social relation of alienation, as a form of incorporation of the contradictions and divisions of the civil society of private individuals, is premised on the reification of human life and its movement into citizenship and alienage.

<sup>10</sup> According to studies conducted by some capitalist “think tanks” immigrants arriving in Europe will “repay” spending on them almost twice over within just five years (*Refugees will repay EU spending almost twice over in five years*, Guardian, 18.05.2016). That’s the reason why Nils Muiznieks, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe expressed the following assessment in the

*«great masses of men are hurled onto the labour market as free, unprotected and rightless proletarians».*<sup>11</sup>

In particular, due to the different conditions of capitalist accumulation in Greece and Italy in relation to the countries of the European North, the Greek and the Italian states permitted the movement of immigrants towards Northern Europe without registering them, as they could not and still cannot be absorbed as labour power into their domestic capitalist production. The political functionaries of capital in the northern European countries dreaded the uncontrolled entry of immigrants and the total breakdown of the mechanisms for the regulation, control and disciplining of immigration.<sup>12</sup> In the winter of 2016, politicians from these countries declared that the “Schengen agreement is dead”. In other words, a serious political crisis broke out within the European Union. Till the beginning of March, the European states situated on the so-called “West Balkans route” (Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary and Austria) erected fences and hermetically closed their borders for undocumented immigrants. This crisis was finally “resolved” with the signing of the EU-Turkey Agreement for the “prevention of illegal immigration” on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2016.

This agreement abolishes in practice the right of asylum and cancels the “refugee” status of the immigrants who come from war zones in Asia and Africa by their classification into the category of “irregular immigrants”. The main points of the agreement are the following:

- The applications for asylum of the undocumented immigrants crossing from Turkey to Greece after the 20<sup>th</sup> of March may be immediately declared inadmissible, without examining their substance. These immigrants may be immediately deported and “returned” to Turkey with the justification that Turkey is a “safe third country” that can guarantee their protection.

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official report published on 31.5.2016: *«In the absence of a common European response, crisis-thinking is short-term. Europe will need to look again to the long term and see integration as a long-term investment... the current situation, dominated by unilateral national action and the absence of a common asylum and border policy, is creating perverse incentives for countries to move away from integration ... Integration support should not be misinterpreted as “pull factors” [for immigrants coming to EU]».* (<http://bit.ly/1UoOzxi>).

<sup>11</sup> K. Marx *Capital, Volume One*, p. 876, Penguin, 1976. Marx uses the term *vogelfrei* to refer to the masses of people which are being proletarianized. This term literally means: “free as a bird” and serves as a figure for the proletarian who is “free” of all the means of production and subsistence, who is totally exposed and exiled from any human community within which she could satisfy her needs and therefore she is only left with the “option” to “freely” sell her labour power in the capitalist labour market.

<sup>12</sup> The loss of control on migration is not only threatening for the capitalist states in functional terms, because it undermines the discipline of labour power and its subordinate, illegalized inclusion in the national labour markets. More profoundly, the freedom of movement, as an ontological condition of the human creative and productive powers, is the hidden foundation of the sovereign power of the capitalist state “which captures and cannibalizes it” and transforms it in its opposite, in the reified and estranged forms of the mobility of labour power, of citizenship and alienage. Therefore, **the immigrants’ struggle for their unobstructed freedom of movement poses an existential threat to the actual foundation of the sovereign power of the state.** That’s the reason why the EU leaders frenetically try to repress this struggle. For a more extensive and deep analysis see the brilliant article by Nicholas De Genova, *The Deportation Regime*.



- Until the consideration of their application for asylum, immigrants will be held in the “hot spots” which are converted to “closed reception centers” (i.e. detention centers) in Lesbos, Chios, Leros and Samos for a maximum period of one month. Subsequently, if their application has not been considered within this period they are transferred to inland “reception centers”.
- Theoretically, up to 72.000 immigrants will be accepted for resettlement from Turkey to the European Union, of which 54.000 on the basis of a “voluntary arrangement”. In fact, the number of immigrants that have been resettled (and will be resettled) from Turkey to EU is very low. Even if this point is implemented, it is a very low number considering that only the Syrian immigrants residing in Turkey are 2.7 million people. Till the 15<sup>th</sup> of June only 512 immigrants have been officially resettled from Turkey to the European Union.
- For every Syrian being deported to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled to the EU on the basis of the previous arrangement. Undocumented immigrants entering Greece after the 20<sup>th</sup> of March are excluded from the resettlement arrangement, i.e. they are punished for their indiscipline.
- Even in the case of the acceptance of an application for asylum, the immigrant may stay in the country only for 3 years. Subsequently, a new application should be made in order to remain in the country. During the initial 3-year period it is forbidden for the immigrants to stay in another country of the European Union for more than 3 months. If they violate this prohibition they will be arrested and deported to their country of origin.
- The previous rule applies also to the undocumented immigrants who entered Greece before the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, apart from 20.000 people who will be theoretically “resettled” to other EU countries. Most of these people whose number is about 57.000 had not registered and had not applied for asylum in Greece precisely in order not to be trapped here. In the beginning of April only 2.700 had applied for asylum. This number has increased in the following months due to the hermetic closure of the borders towards Europe. However, the number of immigrants that have not been registered yet is still very high.
- If the application of an immigrant for asylum is definitively rejected, he/she is transferred to a detention center till the deportation to his/her country of origin.
- It was agreed that Turkey will take all necessary measures to prevent new sea or land routes for “irregular migration” opening from Turkey to the EU
- Once crossings between Turkey and the EU stop or have been substantially reduced, a “Voluntary Admission Scheme” will be activated. In other words, once migration will be controlled, the disciplined import of labour power from Turkey will restart.
- It was agreed that the visa requirements for Turkish citizens would be lifted till the end of June 2016. The implementation of this point of the agreement has been postponed at the time of the publication of this text till October 2016. Also, an upgrade of the Customs Union between EU and Turkey was agreed.

- Apart from the initial funding of Turkey with 3 billion euros by the EU, it was agreed that an extra funding of 3 billion euros more will be given to Turkey till the end of 2018.

### **The politics of the Greek state after the EU-Turkey agreement: isolation, separation and repression**

From the 20<sup>th</sup> of March till the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, 9.750 undocumented immigrants crossed the Greek borders from Turkey and 449 of them were deported, that is less than 5%. Nevertheless, the basic aim of the agreement which was the great reduction of uncontrolled immigration to the EU up to the point of its practical cessation has been achieved.<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, it seems that Turkey enforced measures for the repression of migration at its coastline. On the other hand, immigrants realized that they would risk paying large sums of money in order to cross the Greek borders with a great danger of either being trapped here or –even worse– of being deported back to Turkey.

During the same period of time when the Balkan states closed their borders, the Greek state **modified its strategy from permitting the movement of immigrants towards the northern EU countries to a policy of isolating them in places of social exile**. A number of former military camps in Koutsochero, Schisto, Skaramagka, Alexandria and elsewhere (but also abandoned factories and warehouses) were transformed into the so called “hospitality center”, a euphemism that is used instead of the correct term: surveillance and isolation centers, which are guarded and policed by the army and the police. Although these centers are advertised as being open, they are in fact places of social ostracism. On the one hand, their geographical location has been selected in a way that makes any attempt of communication and solidarity very difficult, if not impossible. On the other hand, the entrance to these centers is forbidden to locals who do not have an official permit, by the cops and the military officers. This ban has extended even to doctors in solidarity providing their services, as e.g. happened in the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May when doctors and other solidarity activists from the self-organized Social Clinique of Larisa attempted to enter the center of Koutsochero to visit patients.

In this way, the state divides immigrants into small and isolated groups which are easier to be overseen and controlled, in order to prevent any possibility of a revolt against the appalling living conditions, against their immobilization and entrapment. At the same time, the immigrants are divided within the centers according to their national origin, which serves the channeling of anger from the police-military authorities and the state to strife among the various ethnic groups and individuals, that is to say to intra-class violence.

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<sup>13</sup> In many cases, the asylum appeals committees judged favourably the appeals of asylum applicants by not considering Turkey as a “safe third country”. Even bourgeois institutions such as the appeals committees could not overlook the fact that the Turkish state has illegally deported in the previous months thousands of immigrants back to Syria, as well as that the first Syrians who were deported to Turkey were detained for three weeks in an isolated detention camp without access to lawyers. That’s why, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, the SYRIZA government passed a legislation that changed the composition of the Asylum Appeals Committees, since the existing ones were not sending immigrants back to Turkey (<http://www.analyzegreece.gr/topics/immigrants-rights-and-racism/item/446-the-greek-government-manipulates-the-asylum-appeals-committees>)

However, the most important goal is the prevention of the communication between local proletarians and immigrants. This is a model for the biopolitical management of populations which are redundant for capital, which has been applied for many years in the refugee camps of Middle East (e.g. in Lebanon), so that these populations would not become dangerous for the capitalist order.

The living conditions within the isolation centers are truly wretched. Even organizations such as the UN Refugee Agency and the NGO ActionAid, which work in tandem with the Greek state on the control of the immigrants, report the crowding of hundreds of people in miserable places which are poorly ventilated, the lack of food, water, electricity, toilets and showers, the provision of food rations which for many days contain only plain rice or potatoes, the inadequate health care. Often the first drop of rain turns the isolation centers into mudflats. In other cases, the tents are exposed to the sun the whole day. The incidents of food poisoning are quite usual while the broader living conditions induce respiratory, cutaneous and gastrointestinal diseases. The fact that the new center in Chios was built on the grounds of a former garbage dump of the island is quite symbolic.

Another aspect of the new strategy of the Greek state was **the ideological and repressive attack against the uncontrollable sections of the solidarity activists** which are not connected to recognized NGOs.<sup>14</sup> This attack began shortly after the signing of the 18<sup>th</sup> March agreement between EU and Turkey.<sup>15</sup> Primarily, the attack targeted solidarity activists belonging to the anarchist / anti-authoritarian milieu, who were accused of “*leading the*

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<sup>14</sup> There are some analyses that greatly underestimate the solidarity movement by not saying a word about the attack of the Greek state and the media against the makeshift immigrant camps and the uncontrollable sections of the solidarity activists. This happens because if they would mention these attacks, they would be obliged to give an explanation for them that would contradict their position of equating the solidarity activities (or “most of them”, which is the same thing if nothing else is mentioned) with charity. Further, it is evident that such analyses do not give political significance to the struggle of the immigrant proletarians for their freedom of movement, as they are permeated by a Eurocentric conception according to which immigrant struggles cannot change the balance of class power unless the separate struggles of local proletarians manage to gain ground. In fact, this political stance, on the one hand, does not recognize the possibility for the development of common class struggles where local and immigrant proletarians will get together, supposedly due to the prevailing “objective conditions”, since it theorizes local and immigrant struggles as two separate, isolated processes. On the other hand, it is clear that this political position underestimates the immigrant struggles, considering them, in the best case, of secondary importance. On the contrary, a revolutionary class position should recognize the real movement unfolding in the present historical time and should not discredit the struggle of the immigrant proletarians for their freedom of movement by falsely implying that the movement of immigrants is an individualist way out.

<sup>15</sup> It is quite remarkable that the first attack for the repression of an initiative in solidarity to the immigrants was done by the mechanism of the so called Communist Party (CP) on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November of 2015 when its members attacked with helmets and batons the squat of the old building of the Worker Center in Lesvos and evacuated it. A few months later, the MP of the CP Christos Katsotis remarked at a question in the Parliament that “*the center of Skaramagka is frequented by strange people*” and that “*members of NGOs agitate the refugees, they spread among the refugees the impression that they will leave the center on the next day, and this has the result of creating tensions*” (*Avgi newspaper*, 13.5.2016). This statement clearly shows that the attack of the CP did not aim at the NGOs working harmoniously together with the state but at the “solidarity activists who create tensions”, namely the uncontrollable sections of the solidarity activists. It is certainly not surprising that the CP assists the capitalist state in the repression of the more radical tendencies of the antagonistic movement.

*refugees to extreme behaviors resulting in conflicts*", of *"instigating the immigrants at Idomeni to violate the fence"*, and so on.<sup>16</sup> The propaganda campaign was led by the government and the police authorities. The same articles in the press revealed the actual fears of the government: *"policemen at the roadblocks on the Axios bridge, in the outskirts of Idomeni, are checking the travel documents and the cars of persons who head towards the village, especially foreigners, in an apparent effort to prevent the distribution of printed material (brochures, maps, etc.) to the refugees and immigrants, which incite them to revolt"*<sup>17</sup>, *"almost the 50% of these activists is of unknown origin and is involved in murky activities"*, *"there is an uncontrollable situation which can be avoided only with the removal of the refugees from Idomeni to controlled spaces"*, *"until then, there is a danger of an escalation of conflicts in the area"*.<sup>18</sup> Apart from the outright debasement of the immigrants who are presented as puppets of the solidarity activists who manipulate them, it is evident that the state was afraid and wanted to prevent the possibility of an explosive meeting and cooperation between the immigrants and the uncontrollable solidarity activists against the violence of the borders and their guards. However, the attack from the state did not stay on the level of propaganda. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of April of 2016 the solidarity initiative *No Border Kitchen* was evacuated and the police made at least 8 arrests of solidarity activists in Idomeni and many raids in the islands of the Northeastern Aegean and elsewhere.

Government's repression culminated with the evacuation of the Idomeni makeshift camp which started on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May. The abjection and the cruelty of this operation were unprecedented. Entry to the camp was forbidden completely even to the accredited volunteers of the NGOs. In this way the distribution of food and the cleaning of the sanitary facilities were obstructed so that the immigrants would be forced to board the police buses that transported them to the isolation centers. As far as the press coverage of the police operation is concerned, entry was permitted only to the state media, the National Television of Greece (ERT) and the Athens News Agency. In other words, even the freedom of press was violated! Immigrants who boarded the buses by force didn't know where exactly they were heading to, an incident showing that some of the practices of the so-called totalitarian regimes such as, for example, the forced displacement to an unknown destination, may well be applied in a democratic capitalist regime governed by a left democratic party. It is estimated that around 4.500 immigrants left the camp on their own, with most of them setting up makeshift camps in the surrounding areas. The Minister of Public Order N. Toskas stated that, in the days that would follow, further police operations would be organized to evacuate these makeshift camps as well. At the time of the publication of this text, the government officials have stated that they will also evacuate the makeshift camps at the former airport of Athens (Elliniko) and at the port Piraeus till the middle of July.

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<sup>16</sup> *Kathimerini newspaper*, 15.04.2016.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Vima newspaper*, 17.04.2016.



## For the struggles, their content and their perspective

Undocumented immigrants have struggled during the last year against the miserable living conditions that have been imposed to them, against incarceration, against social isolation, and for their unobstructed freedom of movement. They have struggled with a plethora of means: demonstrations, the blockade of the railways at Idomeni for many months, spontaneous gatherings and road blockades on the Greek and European highways, hunger strikes and revolts in the detention centers and at Idomeni where they repeatedly clashed with the Macedonian and the Greek police and the list continues. The makeshift camp of Idomeni was a long-term protest for as long as it lasted in itself. The main demands of the mobilizations of the immigrants have been the opening of borders and the obtainment of their broader freedom of movement, the improvement of living conditions in the camps and the “open” centers, the release of those who are incarcerated from the detention centers. The fact that they had lived for so many months in the makeshift camp of Idomeni under extremely bad weather conditions has shown that they possess tremendous decisiveness and energy. They are neither passive victims nor resigned individuals despite the terrible hardships of war and migration. That is the reason why the Greek state has attempted to corral them and isolate them within the “open” and the “closed” centers.

In this sense, the several **squats that have been organized by solidarity activists and immigrants are extremely important**, first of all because they create a public meeting and communication space where local proletarians and undocumented immigrants may come together. In other words, the squats may create a basis for the development of common struggles and that has been amply proved by the fact that immigrants who participate in squats have also participated in mobilizations and demonstrations for issues that primarily affect local proletarians such as the demonstrations against the pension reform that has been passed by the government of SYRIZA, i.e. the left of capital and its state. Moreover, the practice of squatting in itself is a practice of expropriation of capitalist property which today, more than ever, is necessary for the satisfaction of the needs not only of the immigrants but also of the locals. The new measures signed by SYRIZA in the previous months will lead to foreclosures of proletarian houses and evictions, for the first time on a mass scale during the recession years. Therefore, the practice of squatting houses for the satisfaction of proletarian needs constitutes a paradigm for the class struggles of the period that will follow. Until recently, the practice of direct expropriation of social wealth for the satisfaction of needs for the most part was restricted to the refusal of payments of the transportation tickets and to the sporadic expropriations of big groceries by various anarchist groups – with the latter having mainly a propagandistic character.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, there are also problematic points within the squatting initiatives that we should think about and struggle for their supersession. For us, the most important are: first, the paternalistic or humanitarian logic of some solidarity activists; second, the existence of gender hierarchies and of a gender division of labour among the participating immigrants; and, third, the perception of the squatting practice not as a means of direct action for the satisfaction of needs but as a means for raising issues on the scene of “high politics”,

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<sup>19</sup> Before a few years the refusal to pay the electricity bills and the highway tolls was also quite widespread. However, nowadays such practices are not visible in the public sphere.

especially from groupings that have recently left SYRIZA – a perception and a practice that is foreign and opposite to the development of proletarian autonomy.

Moreover, the struggle against the “reception” centers and the detention centers is extremely important because these are the basic techniques for the social isolation of the immigrants and for the prevention of any communication between them and us, the local proletarians. It is crucial to mobilize against the displacement of the immigrants from the makeshift camps of Piraeus and Elliniko before it’s too late. Even if the requests of immigrants for asylum who are ostracized in the “open” and “closed” centers are accepted, they will remain, according to the agreement of the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, trapped within a capitalist state which confronts them as redundant population. That’s the reason why the issue of the satisfaction of proletarian needs against the needs of capitalist accumulation is relevant for all of us, both local and immigrant proletarians. Only on the basis of our collective class power we can put forward the issue of the unobstructed freedom of movement, i.e. the abolition of all borders and all states through the radical transformation of the social relations, and, therefore, through the radical transformation of the relation of the human species with the planetary space.

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Often even the most radical parts of the immigrant solidarity movement speak about closed borders and the so-called “Fortress Europe”. They tend to overlook, therefore, that the border and deportation regime serves in fact the regulation and control of migration and the subordinate inclusion of immigrants as “illegal” workers in a way that facilitates the needs of capitalist accumulation. This spectacle of exclusion is reinforced by the fact that due to the circumstances of the capitalist accumulation in Greece, the Greek state implements a policy of pushing undocumented immigrants to places of social isolation and control or even incarceration. Apart from that, it must be stressed that the discourse about “open borders” may be used by the liberal faction of capital (e.g. the Green party in Germany) in order to concurrently attract immigrant labour power and promote a generalized attack on welfare benefits, on the social and direct wage for all proletarians.

Instead of this, we must struggle against the surveillance and detention centers, against the displacement of the undocumented immigrants and their segregation from the local working class and the class antagonistic movement. We must struggle for the satisfaction of our needs, of the needs of immigrant and local proletarians through initiatives that directly expropriate the capitalist property such as housing squats. With the development of the autonomous proletarian movement for the satisfaction of our needs we can acquire the collective class power which is necessary in order to truly regain our humanity and to **realize the true freedom of movement, i.e. to abolish all borders and, therefore, all states.**

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*Antithesi*

for the abolition of wage labour, of money and of the state  
– for communism



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