

# WAR AGAINST

# WAR



**XUPOLUTO TAGMA**

total objectors from the city of Ioannina

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We borrowed the cover graphics from a CNT poster. The quote on the back cover was taken from Henri Barbusse's opening speech at the International Conference for Veterans and Army Victims, that took place in Geneva on 3rd April and then again on 1-2 May 1920. It is featured in the book "War against War", published by the International Library (Athens, 1975).

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The publication is distributed from hand to hand, free of charge. It is obviously free for use by political groups, we'd appreciate a mention though. Journalists, NGOs, institutions and other do-gooders should do us a favour and leave us alone...

# Introduction

first greek edition, March 2011

Sooner or later it was bound to happen. The time would come when our deferment would expire. We knew we would have to choose. So we chose to act well before the conscription papers came through our door. As far back as spring of 2010, a bunch of comrades from Ioannina started meeting to discuss the issue of conscription and how to deal with it. At the time, this coincided with the first public statement of objection to military service in our city<sup>1</sup>, since the case of Michalis Maragakis<sup>2</sup>.

After many discussions, we decided on total objection and collective action against the wider institution of the army. However, considering many of us will be called up by the army in 2011 and that this issue concerns more people than just ourselves, we chose to create a structure that attempted to provide a political base for all those who may choose the same path as us in the future. Or at least, a structure that could encourage the creation of similar collectives. We chose to create a collective, that would produce antimilitary theory and action and would practically support total objectors. **The name: Barefoot Battalion (Xupoluto Tagma).** We hope that in this way we will add to past and present efforts that have and still are taking place in other areas and countries.

This publication is our way of contributing to that effort. We hereby outline our political stance regarding the necessity for total objection to conscription and military service, as a way of resisting militarism. We try to respond to cliched arguments that are expressed not only in our close family environments, but also within the wider Left and Antiauthoritarian movements. At the same time we aim to reveal the criminal nature of the greek army and its bosses, overturning the myth of Greece as a peace loving country. Highlighting the culpability of nation and country and the roles and responsibilities that they impose is one of the main aims of this publication. Furthermore, we aim to make antimilitary conscience and practice a primary issue even for the antiauthoritarian movement, since we have sadly discovered that the predominant attitude towards military service is that it is "an evil that has fallen upon us, and which we must just get through". Apart from all else, this is an effort to define the individuals culpability in maintaining the militarist machine and to illustrate the necessity for a clear

stance against it. For us, there is no point in getting worked up about wars taking place in different parts of the planet, if at the same time we are sucked into the national war machine without the slightest reaction or guilt. It is ironic for those at the 'bottom', to serve an institution that secures and prolongs their own exploitation and pillaging.

All this and more, is written here, in order to make our position as clear as possible to all those interested. Since our minds are made up, we'd like to share what's on our mind. So those who do chose to stand in solidarity with us in our individual cases, which may eventually reach the military courts, will have known from the beginning what our position was. And anyone who wants to criticise us, can very easily use our public writing as a reference point. Meanwhile, anyone who views objecting to military service favourably, may find some useful arguments.

In May and August, the first few of us will be called up to the army. Our public refusal to enlist will take place amongst a climate of social militarisation. At a time when the security state, the militarisation of labour management, the seeping of militarism into social relations and the demand for "security services" are rapidly expanding. At a time when police and military schools have sky high attendance, and when the only employers hiring are the army, the police and law & justice institutions. At a time when the new totalitarianism will enlist more and more people to its mechanisms' ranks and the possibility of full/open war will increase.

Interesting times! Don't you agree?  
Let's rise to the demands of these times.  
Let's make it clear that we are not all cannibals.  
Let's organise the war against war.

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1. We are referring to the case of Evaggelos Zois who, along with 6 others from different cities of the country, made his refusal to enlist public. See chapter "Declaring our objections" p.25.

2. see chapter "A Short history...", p.3

# A short history of mandatory military service in Greece and objection to it

The first form of mandatory military service in Greece, appeared in 1825. Following the informal volunteer forces of 1821<sup>1</sup>, the temporary government legislated a lottery conscription system, calling 1 in every 100 eligible residents (men between the age of 18 to 30), to complete a 3 year military service. However, the “lucky winner” of the lottery could, if he so desired, be replaced by a volunteer. One such contract dating 1838 in Ermoupoli, illustrates a deal by which Sarantis Rafael makes a deposit in cash to Argyrios Antonis to serve as his replacement. In the period following the 3rd National Summit, during the time of Kapodistrias<sup>2</sup> and King Otto<sup>3</sup>, the recruitment system involved a mixture of volunteers and conscripts, and a number of military codes were introduced, specifying penalties for deserters and absconders. Around 1880, during the presidency of Harilaos Trikoupi<sup>4</sup>, universal mandatory military service was established by law and the institution of voluntary replacement was abandoned. Following 1909, the government of Eleftherios Venizelos intensified the training of those conscripted through the lottery system, and passed a “Military Coaching” law, according to which all young men over the age of 16 where to complete compulsory military training, twice a week. It took a decade of wars (the Balkan wars, the First World War, and wars in the Ukraine and Asia Minor) before voices of objection to military service and the first mass waves of desertion began to appear in Greece.

## Objectors on grounds of Religion

Up until the 1980s, the field of objection to military service was monopolised by people who were motivated by their religious beliefs, and particularly Jehovahs’ witnesses. Their treatment by the authorities was exceptionally harsh, and included exile, torture and being sentenced to death or life in prison. Following 1949, numerous reports testify of soldiers being executed for refusing to wear the uniform or hold a gun (two such examples: In the city of Larissa, Giannis Tsoukaris- 10/02/1945, and in Nafplio, Giorgos Orfanidis- 02/03/1945). The case of Christos Kazanis is characteristic of the arbitrary nature of sen-

tences - he was sentenced to death, but following international pressure his sentence was reduced to 4.5 years of imprisonment, whereas others in similar cases spent up to 23 years in prison. It is also worth mentioning the case of conscientious objector T. Kogios who was held in the military prison of Ioannina, and in 1970, chief officer M. Hatzidakis and first officer Karabas put out two packets of cigarettes on Kogios’ chest. In 1976, this same prison facility despite having been found unsuitable due to poor infrastructure and excessive damp (it’s located only a few metres from a lake), prisoners where forbidden from exiting the wards, denied medical care, visitation and correspondence rights, and had their water, food and heating supplies restricted by the Court Martial Chief of Ioannina and Chief Officer Antoniadis. One conscientious objector was transferred to hospital with severe kidney pain and 7 others with pneumonia. It wasn’t until 1977, following many decades of this kind of treatment against conscientious objectors, that a law was finally passed giving objectors the option of completing a four year service as an unarmed soldier or a four year imprisonment sentence at a military detention centre in order to be permanently excluded from future drafts. However, due to its arbitrary and subjective interpretation by army officials and the incessant objections of the Church of Greece, this law is very hard to put into practice.

## Objectors on non-religious grounds

The first efforts of non-religious objection to the army and military service, began in the 1980s through the publication of “I Refuse” magazine. In December 1986, Michalis Maragkakis was the first person to publicly refuse to enlist, for reasons not adhering to religious beliefs. In response to his arrest and imprisonment, the “Support Committee for Michalis Maragkakis” was set up. Thanasis Makris, a member of the central committee of the National Students Union of Greece also joined the struggle which would later lead to the creation of the Conscientious Objectors Committee out of which, in 1987, the Conscientious Objectors Association<sup>5</sup> was created. Following successive hunger strikes by the imprisoned Maragkakis and Makris, and the constant mass actions of support, the 1977 law concerning unarmed service was extended in 1988 to include those who refuse to enlist on political, philosophical or ideological grounds, although none of the above ever used this law. In 1990 and 1991, Nikos Maziotis and Pavlos Natanail became the first two total objectors to military service and

1. War of independence against the Ottoman empire.

2. Count Ioannis Antonios Kapodistrias, first appointed governor of Greece during the transitional period 1827-1831, ex minister of foreign affairs of Russian Empire.

3. Bavarian prince who became the first modern King of Greece in 1832 under the Convention of London. He reigned until his deposition in 1862.

4. Greek politician who served as a Prime Minister of Greece seven times from 1875 until 1895

5. Visit their official web site: [www.antirrisies.gr](http://www.antirrisies.gr)

were subsequently arrested and imprisoned. At the same time Nikos Karanikas was also arrested and imprisoned amongst others. By 1992, the number of objectors (conscientious and total) had reached 100. Objector Filippas Kyritsis who sought to be legally discharged through a number of avenues (by claiming mental health incapacity and by declaring previous prison convictions), was driven to become a deserter after facing multiple obstacles put forward by the state. He went on to write a book about his experiences in 1993 ("The crazy-paper"), and became prominent in the public struggle against the military through Conscientious Objectors Association. Following fresh arrests

and convictions of objectors Karanikas and Maziotis, in 1997, the first law recognising conscientious objectors and offering an alternative 3 year service was voted in. Lazaros Petromelidis and Giannis Chrysovergis opposed the conditions and length of the alternative service and, to this day, Petromeridis remains a constant target of the Greek state, having been sentenced 16 times.

## Conscientious Objectors in Greece

Life Imprisonment: 26 people

Death Sentence: 42 people

Exile: 68 people

Executed: 2 people

Tortured to death: 5 people

Objectors who fled overseas are not included.

\*Data up to 1994

This table is taken from wikipedia and is based on the following sources:

- Kostas Tsarouhas, "Conscientious Objectors", 14th edition, Ellinika Grammata, Athens, 1996

- Human Rights without Frontiers, "Greece: Deliberate Violations of Human Rights", Brussels, 1992

decade	number of people	total sentence given (years)	total sentence served (years)
1940	127	448	283
1950	79	372	226
1960	137	663	482
1970	288	960	612
1980	1.279	4.972	2.975
1990-94*	818	2.635	1.153
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.728</b>	<b>10.050</b>	<b>5.731</b>

# Why we choose to be Total Objectors to Military Service

As total objectors to military service, we do not devalue or dismiss those who did not make the same decision as us when their time to “become men” came. Choosing to get a Mental Health Discharge, completing alternative service or feeling the personal cost and giving in to family pressure to enlist, certainly does not make one a sell out. Neither an enemy of whatever radical movement is still insisting on fighting for something different to the dominant political and economic reality. We’re obviously not referring to those who dig military service. As far as we’re concerned they’re on the opposite side.

However, the possibility of a collective, coordinated and movement-based effort against the very institution of the army is that which not only inspires us not to enlist, but also moves us away from other alternatives such as mental health discharges<sup>1</sup> and civil service. The fact that the state now acknowledges this choice by law<sup>2</sup>, could only be seen, initially, as a sign of progress for the greek antimilitarism movement. We only need to think back to the devastating experiences of those first conscientious and total objectors<sup>3</sup>. Nowadays, however, the alternative service option should be seen for what it really is. Those high-risk struggles of the past, which carved the first routes and broke the silence around objection to military service, put us in a privileged position today, and we must pick up from where they left with new offensive strategies.

Alternative service essentially means degradingly low-waged work at a state service, where you are stigmatised and banned from your place of origin and most major urban centres, without the right to unionise or take strike action, for a much longer period of time than the normal military service (currently 15 months- almost double the duration).

But the most important thing in relation to alternative service is a characteristic that would not change even if conditions were better and the duration was less. The fact that alternative service constitutes a meander by the state that serves to punish those who question the army and also restrict political conflict in the field of consciousness building. After all, total objection to military service has a wider anti-

establishment meaning for us, and is not only based on a humanitarian, pacifist impulsion around not wanting to learn how to kill.

1. Although this is a legitimate form of objection that many have chosen, it is an individualised form of struggle with restricted potential.

2. Law 2510/97, was the first law in greece to recognise conscientious objectors. It was voted in 1997 and its application began in 1998, giving those who call upon religion or ideology, the right to take up alternative service (yet another obligation in our point of view).

3. see chapter “A Short history...”, p.3

# On Pacifism

We therefore feel it is necessary to make the motives and beliefs behind our antimilitarist political stance (which has become so central to our lives) as clear as possible. Particularly when it comes to the issue of violence or non-violence, a central consideration of most political identities. We do this, not in order to separate and “entrench” or our own efforts from other past or current tendencies within the antimilitarist movement, but precisely because we see ourselves as part of it. It connects to our overall political identity and, as others have done before us, it is our duty to clarify the particular political characteristics of our efforts. Like the fact that pacifism is not one of our motivations.

To use an appropriate example: An experienced older objector would definitely tell you about the “conscience inspection committee”<sup>1</sup>. Amongst other things, this committee asks questions such as: “If you were in a park with your girlfriend and someone attacked her, wouldn’t you hit them?”. As far as we’re concerned, aside from the obvious and ridiculous intentions of those who come up with such questions, we could answer that we do not subscribe to the philosophy of “turning the other cheek”.

As part of our daily experience in this world, we recognise this one very important point: The urgent need for resistance is not against hypothetical monsters that might harm our “defenseless” girlfriend, or invisible age-old enemies of the nation, or foreign workers, or extra-terrestrial jews and dark “terrorists”, or any of these fairy tales that are ceaselessly thrown at us throughout our lives... It is against the whole legal order, the real and legitimate terrorists, local and foreign bosses and their state servants. It’s against the patriotic administrators of the status quo, both on the right and left, who call their interests ‘national interests’ and the interests of the exploited ‘unpatriotic’.

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1. A committee of the Defence ministry comprising of 5 members: a military psychiatrist, a military officer, a high court judge and two academics. It cross-examines the aspiring objector in order to decide how much of a conscientious objector he actually is (!) and consequently permit or refuses him the right to alternative service. According to the testimony of conscientious objector Agis Nikolopoulos, published in the newspaper Avgi, the committees’ line of questioning includes:

- Do you subscribe to a certain party? Which one?
- What do you think about the uprising of December 2008?
- Do you attend demonstrations?
- What is your impression of the greek army from 1900 onwards?
- What do you think about the fact that, since 1998, history books have become friendlier towards the Turks but they still act aggressively towards us?

Against those who, when their lies are unconvincing and they are unable to extract consent through persuasion, they do not hesitate to send their ‘patriotic’ henchmen to suppress strikes, demonstrations and all those reactions that escape the boundaries of bourgeois legality.

For us, resisting violence with violence is not a choice, but an imperative. An imperative that cannot be achieved through the hierarchical, power-hungry discipline of military organisations, but rather through autonomous forms of counter violence. Forms that do not substitute, but rather support and accompany a wider radical anti-systemic critique, which uses words and action to stand up to the direct & indirect omnipresent violence of the state.

## We condemn violence from its source!

Even at a time of capitalist peace (ie. constant war), and despite its attempts to present itself as a platform for new experiences, socializing and coming of age, good laughs and patriotic duty, the army is unable to effectively distract us from its true role, precisely because of its brutal nature. We do not reject the army as an agent of violence and destruction, but as the essential institution for the preservation (and expansion) of State and capital, as well as the reproductive source of all dominant relations and norms (racism, sexism, patriarchy, hierarchy, subordination, snitching, individualism at the expense of others etc).

Even if we examine the army’s role purely as an agent of violence, we will see that it advocates a very specific type of violence. One with specific aims, objectives and means. “Militarism is the compulsory universal use of violence as a means to the ends of the state”<sup>2</sup>. At this point we must clarify the relation between violence, state laws and the law, as well as the relation between means and ends, as they are crucially important to any debate around violence.

The sum of mandatory rules that regulate the relations between individuals in a heteronomous society, is what we refer to as the law. One fundamental distinction within the concept of law is between natural law (which is, for example, a product of universal human logic, human nature or divine will presented in sacred texts), and positive law (which sees legislation as a social construct).

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2. Walter Benjamin, Critique of Violence

In these two respective conceptions of law- natural law and positive law, the latter clearly differs in that it recognises violence as a product of history, and not as an abstract, natural, primeval datum, correlating with Darwin's theory of 'natural selection'. However, both arrive at the same conclusion, that legal = just (and vice versa). A just end, justifies the means, and legal means are used only for just ends. Contrary to the use of violence as an end in itself, which is void of meaning from its outset, there is one constant criterion implied here (the question of whether an end is just or not). This criterion however, directs us to the familiar saying "the end justifies the means". This rationale can be used by anyone for any purpose since there can be no objective ranking of just ends. In addition, it offers no guarantee that a type of violence that we see as a means to a just end will not be considered more effective if it is totalitarian.

For the above reasons, and aside from our main argument that our violence is juster than state violence, it is imperative that we critique violence clearly. Not simply as a means to an end but as a means that gestures and mirrors the end, and vice versa. For example, the need to resist those who exploit us is, to us, a just end. We stand by this to avoid becoming trapped in a relativist rational which equates violence that aims to dominate and perpetuate exploitation, to violence that aims to emancipate and put an end to dominance and exploitation. This same just end, however, may set out to be achieved through a variety of means. Through constant defense, by changing the framework of institutional dominance, by removing the means of exploitation, physically exterminating the oppressors, creating better armies than theirs, torturing, raping, terrorising loved ones etc.

Without additionally questioning the very nature of the means, and the interconnection of means and ends, all the above methods could become acceptable if they are seen to be effective...

Coming back to the issue of the army, it's easy to see that due to its militarist nature, we are dealing with a type of violence which is a raw and predatory means. But despite its brutality, since it can establish Law (for the victor) or preserve existing Law (at times of "peace"), it is used towards legal ends (ie. the compliance of citizens to laws regarding conscription) and therefore does not differ from all other types of violence used for legal ends.

In this respect, a critique of military violence must be synonymous with the critique of legal violence in its entirety, and therefore with

that of state power itself. It must not simply translate into a murky critique of an abstract notion of violence which proclaims "no violence towards any human", such as the one which, for obvious reasons, emerged following the first World War. Nor should it be used only in the extreme circumstance of military service, when we are forced to use it. Especially at a time when the expansion of militarisation is increasingly blurring the line between the barracks and the rest of society.

## Neither victims, nor executioners...

Pacifism is either used honestly (however naively) for the purpose of struggle, or as a veil for state violence. We oppose the hypocritical stance which "condemns violence wherever it may come from" and we want to make it clear that we neither dream of a world of wars, bloodshed and imprisonment, nor harbour abstract pacifist illusions. As Malatesta commented in his comparison of "terrorists" and Tolstoyan pacifists at the turn of last century: "The former would not hesitate to destroy half mankind so long as the idea triumphed; the latter would be prepared to let all mankind remain under the yoke of great suffering rather than violate a principle"<sup>1</sup>.

Neither do we accept the countervailing propaganda which presents necessary social counter-violence as a linear, inevitable path to barbarity and brutalisation (ie. violence is a one way road which almost always ends with mass execution). There are definitely more paths on the road to social emancipation. The history of movements themselves offers many examples of dignified struggles and resistances which recognised the need to fight force with force but did not lose their humanity or give up their principles along the way.

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1. Errico Malatesta, "The tragedy of Monza", London 1900. A response to Tolstoy's essay "Thou Shalt Not Kill" which he wrote following the execution of the Italian King Umberto I.



# War: a healthy state of the capitalist machine

*“The real reason for war, as they themselves admit, is a financial one. War is a matter of commercial and pricing contracts, protectionist policies, markets, competitiveness and the accumulation of wealth for certain individuals. War is a matter of money.”*

Henri Barbusse

opening speech at the International Conference for Veterans and Army Victims, Geneva 3 April and 1-2 May 1920

The production of wealth relies, without a doubt, on human labour. Whether that is included in production as living labour, or contained in tools and machines as dead labour. Without the human hand, no goods could be produced. Even wild, edible agricultural products and animals need human labour to gather or hunt them in order for them to reach our dinner table.

The exploitation of human labour has always been at the heart of most wars. Whether we refer to the Corinthian slaves producing part of the Athenian wealth, the heroic Spartacus and his companions who were dying working the Roman mines, or the shiploads of Africans who staffed the agricultural production of the American south, we are referring to the need of bosses from around the world to expand their economic dominance by accumulating evermore worker power to their sphere of exploitation. In theory, official slavery does not exist in our times. However, the destruction of human relations, social infrastructure and wealth-producing resources of an area due to war, creates contemporary slaves in the form of migrants and refugees who are forced to staff production at the capitalist centre. At the same time, the general undermining of the lives of those left behind, results in an overall decrease of their wages. The fact that people who “happened” to experience bombings will accept to work for peanuts under the worst possible conditions, in the worst possible jobs, can only be the result of war, and not some kind of ill fate. What’s more, military conflicts in the 20th C have proved a direct link between war, the production of commercial goods and the exploitation of labour, through the numerous forced labour camps that were almost immediately turned into extermination camps for the destruction of living labour.

On the other hand, occupied territories offer more than just labour power- they offer new opportunities for investment and commercial success. The British colonies absorbed a large part of the production that came out of the industrial revolution whilst at the same time providing most of the raw materials. The consumption of overproduction

is a burden for any economy facing the real danger of over-accumulation and recession. Faced with the admittedly harder choice of “creative destruction”, bosses seek the safer and more profitable route of “pushing” their stock onto markets that are under their influence. Concurring new markets essentially acts as a pump which removes wealth from specific areas, and places it in the hands of investors and/or conquerors. This is achieved through the establishment of new productive models and methods, new webs of power and new social and institutional regulations which, eventually, will lie in the control of the new ruler of the market.

Possibly the most well-known historic record of war, originates from this part of the world (Greece). The Iliad is a renowned literary work and still to this day, the motives of the crusade against Troy are an object of humorous reference. But beyond Homers’ tales, the reasons for this expansionist war were material ones. The grains produced in the wider area, as well as the metal ores and other natural resources, were a far superior and more profitable attraction for the Argians, than the good looks of Helen of Troy. The war crusade as part of the scramble for the colonies was the result of intra-European conflicts over the possession and distribution of natural resources and routes of commerce. The enforcement and expansion of a dominant class’ rights over the land, subsoil, seas and (recently) the air, has never been a point of discussion amongst neighbouring countries or territories, but rather a matter of dispute and violence. Even in the instances when diplomacy has achieved real results, it has done so with the underlying threat of military action. An area’s military balance of power, affects its potential for economic dominance. In reverse, the degree of development of capitalist relations within a state, affects its expansionist tendency and the corresponding armament acquisitions.

Finally, it’s worth briefly examining the arms industry, as a unique sector of the economy. This industry is completely linked to warfare. Without warfare produced by inter-capitalist competition, it would never reach the high levels of profitability that it manages to achieve.

The high levels of growth within this sector in comparison to other sectors of the economy is a measure of the barbarity of this world. The non existence of war would mean total bankruptcy for this sector, making it hard for anyone to contest the fact that bosses are more than likely to artificially cause fear and conflict in order to sell their deadly weapons.

In the 1935 issue of the socialist magazine, *Common Sense*, Smedley D. Butler, one of the most decorated marines in the history of the american army, noted:

“ I spent 33 years and four months in active military service and during that period I spent most of my time as a high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the International Banking House of Brown Brothers in 1902–1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for the American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went on its way unmolested. Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents. “

# Greek expansionism

*“...this is how the privileged oligarchies of our balkan countries demonstrate a similar expansionist tendency nowadays: Each one is seeking to expand its kingdom of economic dominance, to enlarge it and exploit ever more labour power, territories and natural resources.”*

“War against War”, International Library, 1975, Athens

For years, the dominant perception about Greece's role on the chessboard of international competition went something like this: Greece is a poor yet honest country, tied to and dependent on the interests of a great power, to which its ruling classes have sold themselves to. At the same time, it is surrounded by predatory neighbours with an eye on its territories, even though they 'rightfully' belong to Greece (along with so many others..) since its property rights date back to the Bronze Age. Although this perception could not be further away from reality, it plays an important concealing, misleading and disorientating role.

The greek state, as the main expresser of the collective interests of its ruling class, was founded in 1830. Long before that, the ideological mechanism of the dispersed greek bourgeoisie had already dreamed up the kind of territory it wanted for its future state (with all the disputes over what form that state would take). The publication of Rigas Ferraios' "Charter"<sup>1</sup> in 1797, was pivotal to this. In 1844, Ioannis Kolettis, a prominent political figure that served greek interests in a number of ways, conceives and presents what will become known as "the Great Idea". This dogma became the driving force for the domestic and foreign policy of the greek state from its outset. In many ways, it defined the territories and zones of influence that were to be concurred in order to bring about "historical vindication"<sup>2</sup>.

This expansionist policy, which could in no way be settled peacefully since it harmed others' interests, needed to be disguised with convincing arguments in order to justify the sacrifices in time, blood, goods and infrastructure that would be necessary. It was obviously impossible (at that time at least) for the bourgeoisie to phrase its demands as rawly and cynically as "we need living space, go get it for us". And so, its ideological mechanism worked towards kneading the minds of intellectuals, overriding social resistance and eliciting consent. A series of constructs were developed to this end, which spoke of the continuation of the greek state from Ancient Greece and the Byzantine empire, of our oppressed brothers in neighboring states that needed to be liberated, of greek territory that had been occupied since the first

colonisation, of the holly nature of the greek states' historic mission and many more. Unfortunately the greek states' domestic policy succeeded in homogenising society to such a degree that it enabled no end of expansionist wars. So what if these expansionist ideas faced a few 'setbacks' here and there<sup>2</sup>? They continued to comprise the main dogma of the nations backbone. The result of this dogma -which meant oppression and exploitation domestically, and war externally- is clearly visible if one examines geographical maps between 1830 to 1945. The greek territory expanded at a huge rate, almost reaching its dreamed optimum. Despite dominant myths, we see no other explanation for this but this: In our minds, the greek state, as the representative of bosses, is both aggressive and expansionist. Neither victim nor underdog.

But history does not stop there. If we consider that economic interest is at the heart of expansionism, war is not the only way to achieve this. It may be achieved through financial means. Off course this doesn't mean that the potential of war is taken out of the mix- it just takes a back seat as a constant threat. It may be true that in the 'civilised' world money is stronger than the bullet, but money would be completely useless if the bullet didn't exist to secure it. Brecht's image of the "merchants peering behind the cannons"<sup>3</sup> may not literally apply nowadays, but the cannons are always around to secure the merchants' existence. In this sense, the expansionist economic politics of greek bosses in the Balkans are indeed imperialistic, even if Greece has not officially declared war against a balkan state.

After exploiting, oppressing, stealing, plundering and destroying the domestic social wealth and the social relations that produce it, greek bosses identified new territories to expand their activities in the affected balkan area. The national myth of greece as the underdog that obeys the great powers once again crumbles, proving that economic expansionism is motivated purely by national interests. The rivalry and ultimate prevalence of greek bosses over major global giants in acquiring telecommunication companies and mobile network licenses in

1. Map that impresses all the territories that the future greek state should include.

2. Defeat during the "unfortunate war" of 1897 between Greece and Ottoman Empire. Defeat by the turkish army during the expedition on Asia Minor 1919-22.

Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Macedonia and Serbia, prove that they know how to materialise their interests all too well. Similarly, the development of hundreds of bank branches throughout the balkan area owned by greek banking groups, also testify to this expansionism. Even within the primary sector, it's no coincidence that many of the mines in the balkans are controlled by greek companies and that greek bosses of the agricultural sector are currently investing in romanian wheat farms. The construction capital has also had a piece, in the form of construction and rebuild projects of roads, harbours, and even hospitals and housing. Wholesale trading has also flourished for greek bosses in the form of numerous supermarket chains and high-tech stores, and, at the same time, less developed neighboring markets have absorbed the stock produced by greek companies. Finally (although the list just never ends), it's worth noting that the ridiculously low wages in the balkans are a great draw for the greek secondary sector, with even the smallest industries moving north without a second thought. All this, beneath the watchful eye of the greek state and its army, ready to stand by all the above.

By taking part in wars and campaigns that defined zones of influence within the global competition of states and capital, the greek army has been the main 'tool of negotiation' for the greek states' foreign policy. Whether these campaigns took place in the name of interventionism, democratisation, pacification or anti-terrorism, the greek war machine exercised its murderous activity in the Ukraine (1919), Korea (1950), Somalia (1996), Albania (1997), Iraq (1991 and 2003), Kosovo (1999) and Afganistan (2001). And we must not, off course, forget, the countless assassinations and destructions that it performed during the expansive nationalist upsurge of the balkan wars and the Asia Minor expedition. All these examples, place the greek state in the category of deliberately aggressive states and give it a certain type of status that means it can now secure its bosses predatory plans to a large degree.

The western bloc's victory during the cold war (a militarist confrontation with tens of war fronts across the planet), meant that greece was on the winning side. This new found superiority combined with the the massive armament and restructuring programmes of the armed forces which silently increase the threat of war towards the north, has allowed greek bosses to view the balkan territory as their estate. What other advantage made it possible for greek economic interests to flood the surrounding areas, if not the readiness of the greek war machine to defend its national investments? What arguments managed to modify social relations and local legislation to suit greek bosses, if not those threatening economic stranglehold and war?

At a time when inter-capitalist competition is on the rise and land globally is scarce, how will greek investment protect its interests in the balkans, if not with the strength of its guns?

## Creative Destruction

One of the main characteristics of the way capitalism organises society is through a model of perpetual consumption and production which can secure satisfactory levels of profit. The relatively fast devaluation of products is an objective of the economy, as the shortage of goods leads to an increase in demand by consumers which then allows for the production and sale of new products. We can all imagine what would happen if our computers were built to accommodate every new version of Windows.. Obviously the PC market would collapse.

Theoretically, if products had an infinite shelf life and could satisfy a buyers needs in perpetuity, the tons of surplus production would become useless objects. We can therefore conclude, that a products' shelf life must be as short as possible in order for buyers to be repeatedly driven to consumption. Essentially, the actual destruction of the product creates the space for the product to be recreated, guaranteeing profits for bosses. It is precisely this destruction that is termed "creative destruction" and defines capitalism as a "machine of destruction". The deadly earthquake in Athens in 1999 became an example of this. As many mourned the hundreds of deaths caused by the earthquake, others relished the possibility of new construction and therefore new profits. The destruction of products or productive units, is one of the driving forces of this system.

But aside from destruction that comes about naturally, like the corrosion of tarmac roads through time, what happens in the case of destruction that is artificial and intentional? Probably the most familiar image of artificial destruction in Greece, which reaches news headlines from time to time, is the destruction of agricultural goods. For others, the great Crash of 1929 is a reminder of the use of surplus products as a basis for the 'laying out' of railroads. For anti-militarists and anticapitalists, war must be seen as a form of "creative destruction". The construction companies that took on reconstruction projects in Iraq and Afghanistan can certainly testify to that.

# The role of militarism in the reproduction of gender roles

*“Militarism is a tool for dominance, oppression and exploitation of a population (or part of a population), and it is based on a web of organisational formations of financial, political and nationalist tendencies with the army at its core.”*

Karl Liebknecht

Militarism is ideologically intertwined with nationalism, hierarchy and male-dominant stereotypes around “bravery”. It exists in most capitalist societies, at least latently, and differs in intensity at different times. The subjugation of young people into the army’s oppressive and authoritarian mechanism of violence, war and blood, by blackmailing them into mandatory military service, aims to spread militarism and nationalism into society as a whole. The army’s emphasis on building ‘strength and aggression’ links directly to the constructed image of the “aggressive man” in contrast to that of the “passive woman” which is a role to be avoided. The military cultivates the prevalence of violence and patriarchy to the highest degree. Even though women nowadays, join the army in minority numbers, they must do away with any part of their own subjectivity in order to adopt and perform the reactionary role of the soldier. The creation of a rigid, top down hierarchy, means that the otherwise absent women, are on the receiving end of mens’ “training” in sexism, dominance and violence. In this way, the bourgeois states’ organisation of society along the lines of nationality, gender, religion and sexuality, can be seen as a tool and strategy of power used to manipulate the lives and actions of its subjects.

The division between men and women and established social roles based on gender, which takes place in the military, results in the formation of a society based on sexist principles. The division of established social roles is a form of social racism and aims to present men and womens’ position in society as a natural extension of their biological gender. In other words, little boys go to the army to become “men”, while “weak” little girls stay at home. The concept of biological gender, similarly to every concept in the tradition of social darwinism, gives fertile ground to racist behaviours, social exclusion and the violation of rights. Socially constructed gender is the social and cultural differentiation of people, through their division into men and women, as well as their division by class and nationality. Anatomical differences are not, however, reason enough for social differentiation. On the contrary, they must be recontextualised by society and

the power mechanisms it produces, in order to make social inequalities appear as if they are “normal”. Individuals within contemporary urban society have been forced to accept the identity of the white, western, heterosexual, head-of-the-family and property-owning man, as the archetypal citizen who is in charge of regulating all other social relations. Women were obliged to sacrifice part of themselves, as a prerequisite for accessing citizenship. One such prerequisite is motherhood, not only in the sense of reproducing and caring for the working force, but also in reproducing the future defenders of nation and country. Women have a duty to be mothers of the nation, their social worth is defined by their reproductive function. It is therefore obvious that the militarist rationale, which stereotypically defines men and women, gives birth to harmful behaviours against people who do not fit the predefined biological and social constructs of gender. Just as nations divide people, so do genders.

The top down hierarchy produced within the military, is directly applied within the family unit, where women and children are often dependent and subservient to the male authority figure. They are forced to experience the results of patriarchy and dominance that the army made such an effort to teach its “trainees”.

## Women as spoils of war

Organised armies, paramilitary & fascist groups and various other fundamentalists, often commit rape during armed conflict. The use of sexual violence and rape against women and girls has become a systematic weapon of war and oppression. Gender oppression, militarism and the patriarchal structure of military bodies all inform this type of sexual violence. After all, it is commonly accepted that the army, as the states’ killing machine, and war itself, have a gender, and this is male. This off course does not mean that women are just spectators in all this. Far from it, women in most cases are the victims<sup>1</sup>. The rape of

1. According to official data, rape has been used as a weapon of war in most recent armed conflicts: in former Yugoslavia, in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Bangla-

women during war must therefore be seen as the result of a patriarchally organised nationalist fantasy set into motion. The more blatantly patriarchal the nationalist rhetoric is, the more useful a weapon rape becomes for the attackers, and the more deadly for its targets.

There are different ways in which rape becomes a weapon of war. In many cases it is the result of direct orders from army superiors, or simply an initiative of soldiers themselves, or a combination of both. What is certain is that these rapes are seen as a component of the overall war effort, even though this alone does not define them fully. In any case, they are informed by a common imagined goal - that of ethnic cleansing, of "genocide through reproduction", or the destruction, in general, of social bonds of the enemy society. The destruction, in other words, of the principle imaginary significations of this society, those which bring its subjects into existence. In the Bosnia-Herzegovina war, for example, the capturing, torturing, mass rape, and forced prostitution of women by serbian soldiers and paramilitaries, was characteristic of this kind of ethnic cleansing. The whole pursuit was, off course, triggered by direct orders from army officials, but it would have bore no results, and certainly not at the monstrous scale that it did, without the active participation of soldiers.

The rape and humiliation of the "enemy's women" during war, represents the rape and humiliation of the rival nation. At this point, the way women and femininity in general, are defined as part of the nationalist process of socialisation plays an important role. On the one hand, women must be the womb of the nation, responsible for the continuation of the nation (by giving birth to willing soldiers and nationalists), and on the other hand they must be pure, honest and committed to the family unit, which is the nations foundation. These are considered to be self-evident and inviolable laws of nationalism (and nationalists). So, in order to "protect" their own women and families, soldiers rape the women and wreck the families of their rivals. Women therefore play an important role as metaphor: for example

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desh, Liberia, Peru, Somalia, Mozambique, Sudan and Uganda. A report by the "Committee on women's rights and gender equality" of the european parliament, states that during the entry of Allied forces into Berlin in 1945, the number of rapes soared to 110-800.000, in former Yugoslavia during the civil war in the 1990s the number was 20-50.000, and in Rwanda in 1994 it was 250-500.000. All the above are official estimates which are nearly always lower than number of actual incidents. Rape has also been one of the most powerful and timeless weapons of the greek state and greek nationalism.

as the "mother-country", or "the womb of the nation" as mentioned above. In this respect, women become what soldiers learn to fight for (ie, "we fight for our women and children"), an object they are meant to protect (along with the rest of male property). On the other hand, women are at the receiving end of the most brutal attacks by troops since they constitute the largest part of unarmed civilian populations, excluded from war planning and decision making.

Rape during war is not an exception, it is a general rule, since nationalist hatred and male superiority (as its' main principles), are core to the military and war ideology. Our antimilitarist stance is therefore based on the complete objection to those principles, against 'our own' state and nationalism and against male privilege and stereotypes.

## ...we invaded Köprühisar

“At noontime we invaded Köprühisar. The Turks left [...] The rain had stopped. You’d think it was waiting for all the fuss to stop, so that it could stop too. Gaggles of armed soldiers roamed the muddy turkish town. They were breaking down doors and charging into houses and shops. All you could hear were shouts, female voices, crying, mourning. Gunshots were fired from time to time.

I saw an open door and entered. Just passed the doorstep, the body of an old turkish man blocked the way. Blood was coming out of his chest and nostrils. There was a great fuss inside the house. I walked over the dead turk and went in.

About ten soldiers all dirty and bloody, full of mud, were laughing and play fighting, shouting out manic cries of pleasure. Underneath them, in the middle, was a young turkish woman with her clothes lifted, half naked, manhandled, screaming, crying and begging. As soon as I went in, one of them turned around, looked at me and shouted:

-Come on Taso, come and have a snack!

I dont know why he said it in turkish, and I still don’t know why I replied in turkish,

-Shame on you guys, shame!

As soon as she heard this, the turkish women managed to escape their grip and threw herself at my feet and in a chilling, pleading voice shouted:

-Kurtar beni, kardeşini, kurtarmak! (Save me brother, save me!)

The others laughed and pulled her.

I pleaded, got angry, swore at them, tried to appeal to their good will:

-Shame boys! A woman! Shame! We’re at war.

But nothing. One of them actually drew his bayonet as if he was drunk, his eyes red and cloudy:

-Go to hell “mister”! Or I’ll f... you over!

I left, stepping over the dead turk, behind me the drunken male voices and the woman’s shrieks started once again. Outside, in the darkness of night, the roads were illuminated with the red wretched glow of the torched houses.

As we departed at dawn, the one thousand houses of Köprühisar had become a dull red smoke, you could hear the howling of dogs and screams of women for miles coming from within it. War had been through it.”

A.Dimitriou, reserve officer during the greek states’ expansionist war in Asia Minor (1919-1922).  
The occupation of Köprühisar took place on 25 December 1920.

Featured in “War and ethnic cleansing - The forgotten side of a ten year national expedition 1912 - 1922”, Bibliorama publications.

# The Left and the army

The greek Left has long stopped being considered revolutionary. Apart from very few exceptions (whose impact, in any case, is very small), the whole political spectrum of the left from the Communist Party (KKE) onwards, has abandoned its internationalist past and replaced it with a patriotic rhetoric and practice. Greek flags flying next to red flags at political gatherings, combining patriotic duty with class consciousness, making public statements on matters of foreign policy of the greek bosses, attacking rival parties by calling them 'traitors of the nation', adopting and promoting a definition of 'the people' that includes all classes, competing with the right about who was a better patriot during the german occupation or the military junta, diverting attention from the class war currently taking place here, to a struggle against the EU, the IMF and the USA who are miles away. These are just some of the indications that the left has completely assimilated into the bourgeois system of dominance.

One could trace the reasons for this transformation to the defeat of the left in the greek civil war, or the position of the Third International on the issue of popular fronts, or the lefts' attempt to do away with its reputation as a traitor on the issue of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, or its desire to re-enter the political scene as a legal player following the junta<sup>2</sup>. Whatever the reasons are (and they are surely too big an issue for this publication), the truth of the matter is that the greek left has as much to do with anti-systemic, anti-capitalist internationalism, as PASOK<sup>3</sup> has with socialism... As written in the greek communist youths' (KNE) handbook: "You are a soldier, you wear the national emblem..."<sup>4</sup>. Wouldn't you agree that the reference to a national emblem is more suited to a fascist publication rather than an organisation inviting proletarians from around the world to unite?

As a result, the lefts' position on the issues discussed in this publication, has also shifted to suit its new profile. The army, military service and militarism in general, are no longer criticised from a revolutionary-internationalist perspective. A connoisseur of history, however, would expect the left to take a more radical stance on the issue of the army,

considering the negative outcome that its actions had in the days leading up to the civil war. We are, of course, referring to the lefts' devastating mistake to order its youth to join the national army after the end of the german occupation, as a way of showing its commitment towards national unity as demanded by the Treaty of Varkiza<sup>5</sup>. The unacceptable logic of controlling ones troops from within, in order to prevent reactionaries from prevailing, resulted in thousands of young people being led from the barracks directly to exile and imprisonment onto barren islands and dungeons, thus depriving the Democratic Army of Greece from valuable manpower during the civil war<sup>6</sup>.

The lefts' objection to the bourgeois state and existing class relations of production, is expressed solely through maneuvers that aim to shift the balance of power and bring about victory during elections. However, until the day that revolution is 'voted in', the bourgeois states' institutions and agents can only be critiqued on the basis of how democratic they are. In this sense, the rights and obligations dictated by bourgeois democracy must not be fundamentally questioned (any talk of overthrowing them is obviously out of the question), but we must rather campaign for them to be applied and practiced 'fairly'. The left therefore appears to act as the guardian of democratic proceedings of the bourgeois state. This, of course, diverts attention away from class struggle, and in no way exposes the army's main purpose, which is to protect the interests of bosses and the state within and beyond its borders. KNE once more enlightens us on this point: "Don't forget that the role of the Armed Forces is to defend the country's land, air and sea borders, its National Independence, democratic liberties of the people, and peace"<sup>7</sup>. Let's not even ask what their definition of 'country', 'borders', or 'national independence' is. But how about this very simple question: How can an illiberal, authoritarian and brutal mechanism be the guardian of democratic liberties? Surely this is a contradiction?

In this light, it becomes obvious why a soldier is considered a civilian in a uniform (a position adopted by other left wing parties as SYRIZA

1. During Interwar period national propaganda was accusing communists as agents of Bulgaria, who organise the abruption of the region of Macedonia from the Greek state.

2. On 23-09-1974 greek state's law recognizes Communist Party as legal again, after 27 years of illegal action.

3. Social democratic party that governed Greece many times between 1981 and 2014.

4. KNE's handbook on military service, Chapter: Insults

5. 9 article peace agreement signed on 12/02/1944 between Greek government and EAM/ELAS. That resulted to the disarmament of the left guerilla and the formation of national army.

6. After the Treaty of Varkiza the Greek state launches a period of terror against communists. In 1946 KKE forms the Democratic Army of Greece in order to fight back and establish socialism. In 1949 Democratic Army was defeated by national army.

7. KNE's handbook on military service, Introduction



and NAR, many non-parliamentary left wing groups, the “network of free soldiers SPARTAKOS”), and how intervention is limited to issues of democratisation. The fact that the gratification of minor demands such as the right to read a paper in the barracks, or the improvement of catering on camp, is considered a victory, is an excuse for lack of militancy. At the same time, the lefts’ obsession with accusing NATO of being the only cause of mayhem around the planet, totally omits the responsibility of local militarists and their interests. As if, if NATO ceased to exist, the antimilitarist struggle would also need to end. In addition, there is an implicit perception that there could be a positive side to the militarist machine, especially if it was in the hands of ‘red’ engine operators... So they suggest that the struggle for “a more substantial, modernised military training, which doesn’t waste young peoples’ time”<sup>1</sup> is a revolutionary field of action for the youth. These are, in no way, examples of a militant position that wants to do away with the deadliest institution in human history.

In their attempt to strike a balance between the world of bourgeois legality and their revolutionary imaginings, left wing organisations take on positions that shock, amuse and enrage. On the one hand, they encourage us to make collective demands within the army, and on the other they inform us that we must register our complaints individually so as to not be accused of mutiny<sup>2</sup>. On the one hand they admit that the army is a disciplining machine, on the other they encourage us to be consciously disciplined<sup>3</sup>. On the one hand they kick up a fuss about conscription at the age of 18, but they never explain why they have no issue with conscription at 22, 28 or 38 years old. On the one hand they tell us that they are fighting for “a world without armies”<sup>4</sup>, or towards “blocking the war machine”<sup>5</sup>, but on the other hand they never clarify whether we should object to conscription or not. They tell us that a soldier “struggles against war, exploitation and oppression” and that we should struggle both from within and outside the army, but in the end, those of us left outside it have been helplessly abandoned by those who joined it. On the one hand they tell us that

1. Press release of the Communist Youths’ (KNE) Central Committee following the former Minister of National Defences’ statement on mandatory military service at 18 years of age, 30/04/2008

2. KNE’s handbook on military service, Chapter: Making a report

3. KNE’s handbook on military service, Chapter: Taking the oath

4. Position statements from the 5th conference of SYNASPISMOS Youth. SYNASPISMOS is the core of SYRIZA.

5. “The army prepares war”, Nikos Charalambopoulos, Solidarity Committee for Conscripts

the army reproduces the rotten system that we live in, on the other hand they call on us to reinforce the “team spirit by singling out the slackers”<sup>6</sup>, by snitching on people whose behaviour consciously or unconsciously sabotages the smooth operation of the barracks. They imply that we should enlist to learn how to use weapons which they reckon we will need during the revolution<sup>7</sup>. The ongoing fantasy of “the big day of revolution”, along with the ubiquitous fetishization of guns and violence, justifies the fact that military service is an irrational and reactionary institution. They also hide the fact that throughout history, whenever there was a need for those at the “bottom” to take arms, they found a way, even if they had never served in the army. Finally, the idea that the rulers’ most important weapon, designed to defend their acts of plundering, despite years of improvements and perfecting, has the kind of operational cracks that would allow us to take it over and use it against its own creators, is both unfounded and naive in our opinion.

We are in no way wanting to put down all those who, for reasons beyond their control, were forced to enlist and tried to keep their decency whilst in the barracks. After all, we consider every struggle, however small, which aims to better conditions in our collective “everyday life” to be not only desirable, but also necessary. However, it is well proven that some things cannot be changed from within. Just as contemporary spectacularised social relations will not change if we sign up to Big Brother (the TV programme), similarly militarism cannot be fought through our participation in the army, but rather through a struggle from outside it and directly against it. We feel that it is very short-sighted to treat the army as something external to society- a pleasant or unpleasant break (even a ‘useful’ one to some, as mentioned earlier), as something that just passes without affecting the individual. We also find that any analysis that does not grasp the importance of this institution in reproducing and spreading the dominant ideology in wider society and perpetuating existing social relations, to be incomplete. We believe that even if the intentions behind wanting to make revolutionary changes from within an institution, are pure, they will always end up becoming institutionalised themselves, and not the other way round.

6. KNE’s handbook on military service, Chapter: Slacking

7. Unfortunately, these kinds of statements are also common amongst certain part of the anarchist / antiauthoritarian movement.

# Should the army be mercenary?

A typical question, usually coming from the left, addressing all those who chose to publicly object to the army, is the following: "But if no one goes to the army, it will become mercenary, is that what you want?"

In order to clarify our position- we chose public objection to military service not as a personal way out, or because we couldn't figure out another way to avoid service. Our choice not to join the army and our decision to shout about it, is our practical way of opposing this mechanism in all its forms. If mandatory military service was abandoned, especially as a result of the objection of all those called to staff its destructive monstrosity, it would without a doubt, be a huge victory, over an institution of strategic importance to the state, and one which definitely puts us in a better position in relation to it. After all, we were always against the other important mechanism of state oppression - the police, (even though there was never a mandatory service attached to it). We could therefore, reverse the question and say "would you like it if it was also mandatory to staff the police"? In any case, we will not turn to pointless rhetoric to avoid the question. In reality this question is posed in order to divert and disorientate the struggle against the army and its ideological tools.

The argument put forward by most of the left, who are in support of military service, is to politically intervene from within the ranks, aiming to make the army a 'popular' one, and at the same time condemning objection to military service as a personal privilege. But the real question here is, what has the left managed to achieve from within the army after all these years, on fundamental issues such as imperialism, NATO military bases, mobilisations and requisitions? What exactly did they refuse to do and what kind of climate did they create in the barracks around frontline issues? In reality, the main difference between us and the left on this issue, is that we object to the army on the basis of what it really is - a historical construct created to brutally defend the ruling power at any one time, whether that is against other powers beyond its territory in order to expand its interests, or against the enemy within. After all, we have not forgotten that throughout greece's history, all wars and juntas were carried out by the regular (non-mercenary) army. Despite this, the left cannot come into conflict with one of the main mechanisms that one day might guarantee its own consolidation into state power.

We would, however, like to cast a critical eye at the increasing ten-

dency of the military machine to become more and more militarised. Despite the fact that the army - whether regular or mercenary- is still the army, we ought to examine the specific conditions under which this transformation is performed, and the problematics it encounters. Leaving aside the fact that the existence of mercenary armies is not a recent phenomenon but in fact one that predates capitalism, we will attempt to trace the more recent need for mercenary armies.

Bosses first started to feel this need in the 1970's as a result of mass objection to the Vietnam war expressed across the USA, which led to mass refusal to enlist to the (until then) regular army. During the 70's and 80's, broad spectrum antimilitarist movements sprung up in most developed capitalist states and fundamentally questioned the obligation to serve in the army. The crisis created by the theoretical and practical position of these movements against the institution of the military, meant that bosses were no longer able to trust the old type of conscript armies with wars that were so pivotal to their interests. In accordance to other capitalist states, the greek state also began replacing its old conscript army with a mercenary one the the mid 90's. Particularly since new inter-capitalist competition had begun taking place in the balkans, propelling the interests of greek capital to a new level, at which the old conscript army seemed unable to cope. If we then take into account, the assignment of military activities and functions to private contractors, we can see that the state will not hesitate to give over part of its monopoly on violence (under very specific terms off course), in order to secure the flexibility and professionalism it desires within its military ranks. This was unheard of in previous times. Despite this, and this is where things get tricky, the fact is, that the restructuring of the army must be accompanied by a relevant ideology, otherwise the purely professional forces would become completely separate to society, and this would be problematic. Indeed, the creation of mercenaries as a state response to young peoples' refusal to enlist in the army, created this type of problem. The result of this choice is more obvious in other countries other than greece, where the shift from a conscript army to a mercenary one has taken place on a wider scale (through the abolition of mandatory military service). In the United Kingdom for example, bosses have been troubled by society's shift away from military ideals to such a degree, so as to attempt to bring back a whole array of good old nationalist "ideas". These include nationalist celebrations, military parades, encouraging personnel to go around their daily business in uniform etc.. But even in Greece, ex-minister of defense, Vaggelis Meimarakis, had

clearly stated in a TV interview, that the reasons the greek army is not exclusively mercenary are social and ideological, or as he put it: "...so that young people learn about their duty to their country".

## Why our objection to the army does not stop at our objection to enlist

We must not forget that the army was the place where social role models were created (obedience to national ideals, hierarchy, self-sacrifice etc), but these were not restricted to the barracks. Instead they were diffused to the rest of society. This is still true today, particularly since the 90's, when historical circumstances demanded a change in strategy for bosses, in order to extract social consent. The 'war on terror' was the perfect platform form which to achieve this. Particularly since the events of September 11th, the concept of the security state has now become reality, and whilst the definition of 'terrorism' is constantly broadened to engulf more and more types of 'delinquency', a climate of fear is continuously cultivated justifying the increasing militarisation of our everyday life. The call for better 'security' has triggered a plethora of state and private schemes such as CCTV cameras, security guards, new police bodies, and even changes in the law giving the army more power to operate in our cities. The starting point for this large-scale application of the security dogma here in greece, was the 2004 Olympic games, even though the overall defense dogma was already being reviewed following September 11th (including the involvement of the armed forces in dealing with "asymmetric threats"). It was within this framework that the first special military units created to deal with demonstrations appeared. The fact that during the uprising of December 2008, after the death of Grigoropoulos, parts of the regular army were on call, is indicative.

In the face of increased military conflicts since 1991 due to inter-capitalist competition, and the effects of the security dogma on social relations through the imposition of a new type of militarism that encourages an even more brutal individualism, we feel it is our duty to resist contemporary militarism in all its forms. So our answer to the question "will you join the army?" will always be plain and simply NO.



## One thing we could not have left out

At the time when the contents of this publication had been finalised, a leaked video of a military exercise of the 71st airborne brigade, (code name “Kallimahos”), that took place on 3rd & 4th February 2011 in the area of Kilkis, was made public. The aim of the exercise was to train the military riot squad to deal with demonstrators. The video clearly shows a group of soldiers pretending to be demonstrators- throwing molotov cocktails, waving bannons and shouting “freedom”, against groups of soldiers, fully armored riot police with trained dogs, armored vehicles and a water canon. So here we have it- the new dogma we mentioned earlier, is caught on video. The army, being trained to deal with demonstrations and political gatherings in inhabited areas. So who is the enemy? Obviously a domestic one.

To delve even deeper, apart from being a part of the national army, the 71st airborne brigade is also part of HELBROC- the balkan battle group led by greece, as well as the NATO Response Force (NRF), which since the treaty of Lisbon has the power to intervene domestically in countries facing social revolt. As far as the justification of government officials for the training exercise, retired general Mylonakis said it all when he referred to the December 2008 uprising to explain why this training is relevant to todays greek society. He also made reference to a similar EU training exercise targeting supposedly ‘non-legal’ immigrants.

There could be no better example to illustrate all that we have discussed above.



# War expenditure of the greek state

As a country, greece maintains a disproportionately large army in relation to its size and population. Amongst NATO countries, only the USA spends a larger proportion of its GDP on military expenditure than greece. The myth of an 'external enemy' cultivated since the early days of the greek state, either to serve interests (of politicians, arms traders, bosses etc.) or due to blatant stupidity (of fascists, patriots, nationalists etc.), allows defense spending to rocket to sky-high levels resembling that of countries in a state of war. One look at the huge numbers that are traded in order to 'maintain' peace, is enough to make anyone wonder what happens to all that money. This is especially infuriating at a time of 'crisis', in the name of which the lower classes have experienced the most ferocious attack on their established workers rights since the 1980s. Let's allow the figures to speak for themselves.

According to official records, in 2009, greece allocated the equivalent of 3.4% of its GDP, for NATO-related military expenditure. This roughly corresponds to 7 billion EUR<sup>1</sup>. To put it into context, this is approximately the same amount of money that the government aimed to collect in March 2010<sup>1</sup>, by raising taxes and VAT, and abolishing Christmas and Easter bonuses. As Evaggelos Venizelos, defense minister at the time, explained: "Anyway, the country's military expenditure has decreased significantly. The Defence Ministry's budget for 2010 was a total of 6 billion EUR, which is 2.8% of the GDP. Our spending on armament programmes will not exceed 1,8 billion and investment in weapon systems will correspond to 1% of our GDP"<sup>2</sup>. In other words, the greek army consumed 6 billion EUR at the same time as wages and pensions were slashed in order to bank a few million euros. The 2011 budget looks equally disheartening, with Defense ministry spending predicted to reach 5 billion EUR<sup>3</sup>, most of which will be directed towards state and private arms companies. Experience, however, has proved that these predictions mostly refer to baseline prices and do not include revisions and re-estimations which routinely push the figures up.

It is particularly interesting to look at the expenditure of each individual branch of the army. First of all, the terrestrial army, appears to be in utter chaos, and purposely in a state of confusion. No one seems to

know anything, no one knows what things cost, and there are no official figures released. However, the few figures that are occasionally circulated are outrageous. In 2009, the terrestrial army officially employed 102,000 individuals, both in a permanent and reserve capacity (even though in reality, following the reduction of military service, this figure did not exceed 80,000). Denmark, on the other hand, being the european country closest to us in terms of population size, has an army of about 15 thousand individuals<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, in the navy, the daily cost of a frigate which spends 70% of time at sea and 30% at bay, is calculated at 55,000 EUR (based on prices from 2008). This sum includes all expenses such as maintenance, fuel and personnel subsistence. According to the same report, a gunboat costs 25.000 EUR a day, as long as it is at sea only 50% of the time<sup>5</sup>. Finally, according to the Air Force General Staff, between 2000 and 2008 a total of 18,505 fighter planes were launched to supposedly intercept turkish airplanes alone. The average flight time is 1.5 hrs which adds up to 27,757.5 flight hours. Considering the average cost of a one hour flight is calculated at 15,000 EUR, the total cost of these flights is 416 million EUR<sup>6</sup>.

Information relating to spending for supposed 'peacekeeping missions' are confidential. We are, off course, referring to the greek occupying forces currently deployed in numerous occupied areas of the world. Greece's involvement is a move of tactical diplomacy in order for the country's business interests to get a foot in the door of the new markets that open up following its allies' predatory 'peace missions'. On its' website, the Hellenic National Defense General Staff mentions that when it comes to 'peacekeeping missions', it places particular emphasis on areas of interest such as the balkans and the middle east<sup>7</sup>. We need not mention the business adventures of greek companies in the balkans, nor Iraq's oil, nor the fact that 95% of the worlds production of opium originates from the, now, "free and democratic" Afghanistan. As far as the cost of these operations is concerned, unofficial sources calculate it at 300 million a year, not including the cost of obtaining the means and weapon systems that are needed. Other sources mention daily spending of 1 million EUR only in Afghanistan.

Before delving into the armament programmes, let's take a short look back in history. As we have all been informed, 2010 was the year that

1. <http://www.minfin.gr>

2. <http://www.evenizelos.gr/speechesintervention/speeches2009/1822-propyologismos>

3. <http://www.minfin.gr/budget/2011/proyp/index.html>

4. <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=81773>

5. <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=81774>

6. <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=81775>

7. [http://www.geetha.mil.gr/index.asp?a\\_id=2354](http://www.geetha.mil.gr/index.asp?a_id=2354)

this most southern part of the balkans was brutally hit by the “great crisis”, forcing its poor rulers to seek help from their allies. Willingly, they flocked in from both sides of the Atlantic in order to give this poor old country loans, that would save it from bankruptcy. Of course, not everyone could be saved, so the lower classes could not avoid bankruptcy and had their wages and pensions brutally cut, and their tax, VAT and general unemployment increased. And here we have an infuriating paradox: those pressing for cuts in public spending (namely our european partners), and a reduction of the country’s deficit (with whatever consequences that may have on our lives), are also encouraging sales of weapon systems from their industries. So instead of public debate focussing on reducing armament expenditure (or the church’s expenditure for that matter) as a way of cutting the deficit, we are faced with the bosses irrational mantra that “cutting wages not military expenditure is the only way to salvation”. The only time that the issue of cutting the armament budget was raised was merely a media exercise. In actual fact, the defense ministry basically delayed payment for new weapon systems so that the spending would be registered in the next years budget. That way greek capitalism would still score favourably with foreign investors, and at the same time squaddies could publicly complain about the cuts during a time when their country needs them most... On 11/02/2010, the deputy defense minister at the time, confirmed that the government was going ahead with the acquisition of 6 french Fremm frigates expected to cost around 3 billion EUR<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, trade with germany was equally lavish: Greece accepted the U-214 Papanikolis submarine despite dispute over its quality with the german manufacturing company, HD<sup>2</sup>. It cost greece 500 million EUR, although HDW values it at 300 million EUR today. Greece also accepted the germans demand for a large lump payment during 2010, despite the fact that the agreed 9 year payment plan specified that payments would not exceed the sum of 200 million EUR per year<sup>3</sup>.

These sums of money, however, are nothing but the tip of the iceberg. Behind every equipment purchase, millions are traded in the form of bribes and commissions. The most recent and blatant example is that of the Papanikolis submarine. According to statements submitted to

1. <http://tvxs.gr/news>

2. <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/greece-in-default-on-u-214-submarine-order-05801/>

3. <http://www.ethnos.gr/article.asp?catid=11378&subid=2&pubid=11815022>

the prosecutor in Munich, between 10-12 million EUR were paid in bribes for Papanikolis alone, whilst the cost of commissions reached a record level of 5% of the whole orders cost<sup>4</sup>. Another similar case is currently being investigated by the american justice system (not because the german or american courts are committed to justice or anything, but because in the face of inter-capitalist conflicts, some things occasionally manage to surface). Daimler, the american automobile manufacturers, had been bribing state officials through offshore bank accounts for 5 years (between 1998-2002). It won contracts in many countries and greece was, off course, one of them. The same source mentions that during that period, greece purchased 6,500 military jeeps!<sup>5</sup>

Until recently, all this was a well-known secret. Nowadays however, confirmation comes from high ranking officials. The first one to blow the whistle was the aforementioned deputy defense minister who stated: “Many got rich and are still getting rich, and many built political careers of armament contracts. This is no longer a secret.” In this case, justice is not only blind, it also appears to be deaf, since no one within the justice system thought these statements were worth any further investigation. The response of the then government representative G. Petalotis, was even more hilarious: “Mr. Beglitis [the deputy defense minister], has expressed the governments decisive urge to streamline defense spending, and the greek people recognise this”. To add insult to injury, the defense ministry’s former General Manager of Equipment also confirmed that he too knew the names of those who profited from bribes but... there was no point mentioning them! In this occasion a standard disciplinary procedure was ordered..

We kept the best for last: the confidential, therefore unofficial, figures from the cost of military parades. We really do hate these more than anything! The annual parade ceremonies on March 25th (the national day of celebrating greek independence from the ottoman empire), costs the infantry 750,000 EUR, the navy 308,000 EUR and the air force 1,000,000 EUR! As for the annual parade on October 28th in Thessaloniki, the figures are 430,000, 470,000 and 1,000,000 EUR respectively<sup>6</sup>.

Our critique however, does not aim to highlight the mismanagement

4. <http://www.skai.gr/news/politics/article/140446>

5. <http://www.avgi.gr/ArticleActionshow.action?articleID=534235>

6. [http://www.athensvoice.gr/files/av/pdf/av\\_290.pdf](http://www.athensvoice.gr/files/av/pdf/av_290.pdf), p.23

or lack of clarity of all the above, as part of an attempt to appeal to some kind democratic process of complaint. If greek capitalism was better organised at covering its rear, all the above ridiculous situations may not have occurred. Our critique however, would be the same. We would still attempt to point out the army's central role in relations of production, and the whole economic and social structures formed around it. In this respect, we do not see the lack of official figures, the various 'independent' media reports or the leaked statements of high ranking officials, as proof of a dysfunctional system. Instead, we recognise an ideological use in the existence of purposely ambiguous and murky information as a tool for maintaining an operational state of chaos. After all, we suspect that our critique is not the main reason for which bosses do not report on the transactions of their military arm.

[...] If however, you asked me to name a high priority reform, I would chose the issue of abolishing military service, especially today, when changes in social security and labour relations are creating new conditions. I would also say that we can only be certain of the true cost of our armed forces if the possibility of abolishing military service is researched and costed up, since this is the only way that we can save money whilst expanding the country's defense capacity.[...]

Who do you think said the above? A freak? A lefty? A liberal academic? An older objector? Guess again. These are the words of B.Vasilakos, the defense ministry's general manager of equipment from April 2006 to October 2010. We cannot resist sending him an invitation to join the Barefoot Battalion?!

Vasilakos' interview:  
<http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.politikh&id=234341>

# ...but what if there's a war???

By refusing to offer ourselves to the service of the state, and due to our overall antimilitarist stance, we are inevitably questioned about what our position would be in the case of a war. We will examine this in conjunction with the ideological construct of 'defence', as two things that we feel are inherently linked.

First of all, since the causes of war are very specific, and born out of a system of capitalist exploitation, it is an antimilitarists duty to struggle against the very causes that create wars. In this respect, objecting to military service is one facet of the wider anti-capitalist struggle. Apart from anything else, the direct refusal to be assimilated into militaristic mechanisms contributes towards the expansion of an internationalist culture which can rise up against war profiteering and nationalist hatred, and may, in the future, put the exploited in a position of strength from which to avoid the mistakes of the past. In any case, the best way to deal with war is to prevent it.

Apart from this overall position, with which many may agree with, we are often presented with a number of questions that seem to come about automatically, even amongst those whose motives are not malicious from the outset. The most common ones are: "But what if we are attacked?", "What if we need to defend ourselves"? The 'defence' argument is the last fort for those who argue for the necessity of the military and the futility of an antimilitarist struggle, especially when combined with the usual populist psychological blackmail: "...what if the barbarian turks come to burn our houses, rape and kill our mothers etc.". In other words, they tell us that the state has a duty to prepare us as soldiers, in case we need to face the big bad invaders

It must be made clear that as part of inter-capitalist competition which often escalates into war, the defense argument is commonly used to lead the masses into slaughter. No imperialist ever invited 'his people' to experience the misery of the fronts or meet their death, as part of an attacking force. In every instance, the ruling classes put the blame on foreign "enemies" and presented war as unavoidable. As H.W. Goering cynically confessed during the Nuremberg trials "...All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country."<sup>1</sup> Looking back at key historical examples of the 20th and 21st C, such as Germany in WW1, the balkan wars and Hitler, as well as contemporary 'military interventions' (as war seems

to be called nowadays), it is clear that the main ideological construct underlying all official declarations of war was the argument of defense against those threatening our land, 'culture', and sense of justice.

As far as Greece is concerned, the dominant ideological construct portraying greece as a "poor yet honest little country", constantly defending itself against malicious foreigners, crumbles all too easily with just one look back into history. As Filippas Kyritsis poignantly comments<sup>2</sup>, "...We must not forget that the greek army's function has never been a defensive one. Since the creation of the greek state, the greek army has only ever waged offensive wars of conquest, thus managing to expand the country's border right up to the river Evros<sup>3</sup>. It has spilt much blood within the country's territory and has played a leading role in the slaughtering of many civilians and the destruction of their property. During the second world war, the greek army invaded Albania reaching the towns of Korytsa and Argyrokastro with the hope of adding southern Albania to the greek states' territory. Greek nationalists still refer to this area as 'northern Epirus', implying that the area is an extension of this western greek county. We must also not forget that most of the areas conquered by the greek army were not predominately inhabited by greek-speaking christians. So to say that these areas were 'liberated' (as in the case of the county of macedonia), is actually an insult to those ethnic groups that were the majority of the population, and who were either violently subjugated to the greek state (turks, bulgarians and albanians), or systematically exterminated (as in the case of the jews)".

The strength of the defense argument as propaganda is also apparent in the fact that at crucial times in history, for example during WW1, the labour movement was not able to come up with a collective response that would rise up to prevent the oncoming slaughter. Overall, labour parties and unions adopted the dominant rhetoric about the patriotic duty to defend ones' country, and gave their full support to this 'national affair'. Karl Libnechts' example is indicative- he was the only one in the whole german parliament to vote against the war effort. This does not mean that there was no antiwar sentiment and action. But the few bright exceptions that exposed the real reasons behind war by calling on 'workers of the world to unite' against the

1. [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Hermann\\_G%C3%B6ring](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Hermann_G%C3%B6ring)

2. «A few words about the army and militarism», [http://www.sitemaker.gr/fakyris/page\\_GREEK\\_7.htm](http://www.sitemaker.gr/fakyris/page_GREEK_7.htm)

3. Greece's most northern border with Turkey and Bulgaria



madness of massacring each other for the capitalists' sake<sup>1</sup>, as well as the antiwar mobilisations that took place in many European cities, managed nothing more than to salvage the little honour that the internationalist movement had left.

Even within the anarchist movement there was conflict, as outlined in the correspondence between Kropotkin and Malatesta at the time. On the one hand, there were those who believed that the defeat of Prussian militarism brought the possibility of social revolution a step closer, and that every militarist should take the side of the country under attack. On the other hand, the majority saw war as a consequence of the capitalist system and proclaimed that this war had nothing to do with class struggle that anarchists are involved in, and therefore those summoned to take up arms are not in a position to distinguish the attacker from the defended. It instead called for sabotage and desertion, often bearing impressive results<sup>2</sup>.

In Greece, at the time of the Asia Minor expedition, Greek communists appealed directly to Greek soldiers to wage class war instead of the imperialist war of the Greek capitalists, and called for the withdrawal of the Greek army and for international class solidarity. One of the antiwar movements' leading figures, Pantelis Pouliopoulos, later went on to become secretary of the Greek Communist Party<sup>3</sup>.

In conclusion, we feel that the 'defense' argument is used as blackmail by the status quo in order to conceal the true nature of war. Conflict between the ruling classes of two countries as part of inter-capitalist competition (or rather, conflict between their citizens who are sent to do their dirty business for them, since they are not prepared to

spill their own blood for the sake of 'the nation'), are a permanent feature and not a random event or the product of age-old rivalry. The outbreak of war cannot therefore be talked about in terms of "who started it first", as if states are immature school children having a fight.

On the other hand, when it comes to being emotionally blackmailed with the threat of 'invading barbarians', we know that barbarity and brutalisation are not intrinsic characteristics of just some people and their armies. They are central features of all wars and all armies, including the Greek one. Carl von Clausewitz describes war as an act without boundaries, conditions, or conventional curbs, since it constitutes a political tool of murder designed to force one's opponent to rapidly submit<sup>4</sup>. We feel it is naive to suppose that the Greek army is somehow an exception to this. After all, through the contribution of historical and journalistic research, its many atrocities have long surfaced<sup>5</sup>. We therefore refuse to turn into barbarians ourselves, before any attack even takes place.

We see objection to military service as yet another means of promoting the internationalist and antimilitarist tradition of radical movements, which nowadays, seems to be buried under tons of patriotic dirt. We are morally obliged to refuse to offer our services in a potential war, since we refuse to be part of the further brutalisation of this world, and because, as part of a wider political choice, we see inter-capitalist war (in whatever form it takes) as a step back from creating a world without borders and nations, based on equality and solidarity. As expressed by leading personalities of the revolutionary movement almost 95 years ago, in every place, in every situation, whether in war or at peace, we will not stop proclaiming that "that there is but one war of liberation: that which in all countries is waged by the oppressed against the oppressors, by the exploited against the exploiters"<sup>6</sup>.

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1. One such example was the Zimmerwald Manifesto which was put together by leading members of the European revolutionary movement during an antiwar conference that took place a year into WWI. See the full manifesto here: <http://www.marxists.org/ellinika/archive/trotsky/works/1914/09/zimmerwald.htm>

2. You can read more about this dispute here: «Chi fa la guerra non va lasciato in pace», Rete Anarchica Antimilitarista, <http://reporter.indivia.net/archivio/materiali/varie/antimilitarismo/opuscoloantimilitaristadefinitivosing.pdf>. Also here: "Gli anarchici e la guerra" prima parte, <http://it.internationalism.org/node/790>

3. Vaggelis Koutalis, "Internationalism as an Alternative Political strategy in recent Balkan history", [Paper presented at the Greek Social Forum, Thessaloniki, June 2003], [http://www.okde.org/keimena/vag\\_kout\\_balkan\\_inter\\_0603\\_gr.htm](http://www.okde.org/keimena/vag_kout_balkan_inter_0603_gr.htm)

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4. Stratos Dordanas, "Life under the violence of the Occupation, 1941-1944", featured in the collection "Occupation-Resistance 1941-1944", Nea Istoría publications

5. For example, see Tasos Kostopoulos, War and Ethnic cleansing, Bibliorama publications

6. International Anarchist Manifesto on the War", was published in February 1915, signed by a number of well known anarchists, including A. Berkman, E. Goldman, E. Malatesta, D. Nieuwenhuis etc. <https://robertgraham.wordpress.com/2014/08/07/international-anarchist-manifesto-against-the-first-world-war/>

# Declaring our objection

after 2010 objectors from "Xupoluto Tagma", together with other objectors, have published several statements in order to clarify their motives

## The army will lose us too – Collective public statement of objection

Let's state it as simply as possible. We don't want to join the army. We don't want to become soldiers. We don't want the army neither for us nor anybody else. We are repelled by a mechanism of authority, hierarchy, absolute discipline, irrationalism that eliminates one's personality, differences or special characteristics. This mechanism is only there to exercise violence upon others as well as upon its own members. We know the role that armies have played throughout history as slaughterers, conquerors, occupation forces and most recently as "peacekeeping forces" or "humanitarian missions". We also know the medals our own national army has been decorated with. The role it played during dictatorships, both before and after the war, and mostly, during the dictatorship of 1967. We know about its international missions in Ukraine, Kosovo, Korea, Afghanistan.

If there is any meaning in the word "country" for us, it sure does not involve hatred against the Turkish, Albanian or Macedonian etc. neighbour, who might be a pupil, a worker or a student, and who is also forced to swallow the same bullshit about national interest. Bullshit which we are fed with not only by the national ruling class, but also by the militaristic caste (fortunately much weaker and disdained than ever before in this country). It is clear to us that the line of conflict we have chosen is against our boss, against every hustler-politician who governs us, against all capitalists of this country who pull the wool over our eyes, against every kind of fascist who lives among us and not against the people on the other side (their only sin being that they were born on the other side of the borders).

We are outraged by military expenditure. It has been 10 years since we finished high-school and fewer since we graduated from our colleges and only 2-3 years since we found a job. We did not have enough time to forget the shortage in teachers, books, lack of infrastructure and opportunities in general. We have already experienced the horrifying notion of the basic salary, the agony of whether our boss would provide for our insurance contribution record or not, and all this after we managed to escape (so to say) the agony of unemployment. At the same time, more and more military aircrafts keep flying higher and frigates keep sailing farther. There is no national enemy bogeyman that can convince us that this equipment is really needed, and the motto "if you want peace, be prepared for war" is for sure one of the

sickest mottos coined by human beings.

The army's social role is also a millstone around our necks. Another chapter in the linear dimension of our lives. A year away from real life, away from the things we love, we do, we struggle for. And that because "the experience of the army is remarkable", "a fantastic climate" (we feel that these lines are almost pitiful), and especially because we "will (finally) become men". Well, no. If manhood is what you are, keep it to yourselves. Let us remain children, let us also be in contact with the feminine (or any other) side of ourselves .

What is the point if you don't come out and shout it?

We are in solidarity with anyone who refuses to join the military mechanism, anyone that questions compulsory, military conscription by being absent or by taking any other kind of different-alternative course of action. We are in solidarity with those who stick their tongue out and jump from the boat or choose another boat. It just doesn't suit us, it is not what (after a lot of thought and discussion) we choose. We think that now is the right time to come out and object conscription in a political, public manner. We think that we need to break the silence surrounding the issue, creating a tear in the web of certainty that "this is the way things are" and give voice to those voiceless thoughts that this is not the only way things are . It is the time to talk openly about the abolition of compulsory military service (always having in mind the idea of the abolition of the army as such), while objecting to every right the army and the state have, to enforce it.

It is the time to make clear and non-negotiable that it is our right to consciously "recruit" our time, disposition, knowledge and our every skill to the social actions and social fields of our choice. Social actions and fields that we prioritize and we know, better than any monstrous centralized mechanism, how best we can offer.

The fact that we have met and taken an unforced decision to walk the same path gives us joy and strength . We found one another and we joined forces and our will to move not, as they would have preferred, in units lost in the current news and the chaos of events , but as collectives, small or large, in solidarity and mutual trust with an aggressive and clear discourse.

At the conscription call-ups of May and August 2010, some of us will neither join nor hide . We will wear our summer clothes and not a camouflage uniform, we will go camping and not to a military camp. Knowing the possible consequences and assuming full responsibility for our choice, we will refuse our military fate, maintaining our political and social substance intact.

Athens – Thessaloniki – Ioannina – Korinthos / May 2010

Panagiotis Siavelis, Aggelos Nikolopoulos, Moris Zafiriadis, Dimitris Sotiriou, Meneleos Exioglou, Evaggelos Zois, Stavros Kefalas

## Don't count on us!

They have been coming at our homes seeking for us. They also brought us an official paper with commands listed on it. With stamps, army badges, coded nominations, full of war lords' signatures. They announced us that we have a duty towards the country, the nation and the race; a duty, to defend all what is sacred and holy about this place. Without further delays, to dress us up in khaki, to become men at last, to become soldiers at last.

At the times of the ancient city-state war was not a pursuit for slaves. Nobody would conceive of placing the tasks of the protection and expansion of the city- state interests in the hands of slaves. It was common-sense that slaves did not have any reason to fight in defense of their dynasts' interests. On the contrary, they had every reason on earth to rise up against them. Therefore wisely at those times, nobody would entrust the spear in their hands. You have turned this entire thing upside down though! You have transferred to us the obligation to fight on your behalf; to kill each other, us contemporary slaves world-wide, while withholding for yourselves the enjoyment of reaping the fruits of our bleeding . A marvelous inversion! You deserve to be congratulated! But an end must be put to all of that.

We, the ones signing this declaration underneath, have since long ago become aware of our position in this world, which you insist on calling "civilized" and which we insist on struggling to subvert. We are perfectly knowledgeable of the fact that the values of law-abidance and

orderliness that the military mechanism protects are nothing else but the safeguarding of the flawless function of a nexus of power- dominance relations, which reproduces exploitation, repression, death, and pain for us the "down under"-ones and wealth, privileges and enjoyment for all those "on top". We also know sufficiently well, that for the distribution of wealth, which we are producing you keep on competing among you, similarly to hyenas over a dead corpse; and that for throwing your competitors out of the distribution game you reach the point of devouring each other by drawing up your armies to fight against each other. The most outraging thing about the entire matter is that you require us to kill ourselves, becoming your armies, so that you can ensure the unlimited right to the distribution of the wealth that we have produced. In any case, you require our lives in order to consolidate your wealth, while deluding us with brindled, phony consumerist pearls.

You, the masters of this world together with your social allies have got fortunes and property- rights to defend, interest and influence domains to expand, entrepreneurial opportunities to scrounge, wealth resources to conquest, national, peripheral and/or hyper-national dominance to preserve, business projects and banks to proliferate, human labor to exploit and human life to reap. We, as the exploited ones of this world what among these entire things do we have in common? What among all of those objectives do unite us under your camp? Which interests are going to place us side by side in their defense? And which ones among those interests are going to bring us closer to the aims of complete equality, freedom and the cessation of human exploitation?

Now, what did you expect? Us to believe that we are allies, simply because we have coincidentally been born on the same piece of territory as you? That we perceive of everything beyond your field of dominance as hostile? That we start throwing up hate for everything you foist as alien? That we will protect you from your enemies within the fields of your capitalism-internal concurrence? Did you expect that we will view you as "our own folk", "co-Greeks with a common fate", "co-warriors" who will in common defend our "brother-less nation", because you have forcefully baptized us into your religion, you have castrated us in your schools, you have hypnotized us through your TVs, you have hacked us within your nuclear greek-orthodox families, you have molded us in the frames of your gendered and racial segregations, you have nationally animated us at your parades, you have

stuffed us with the supposedly superiority of your civilization, and you have hazed us with your ballot-boxes? If you had expected that we will turn into your lot, that we will go around shedding blood on every corner of the earth, you should know you've failed. You have failed because we have managed to gain social intuition and class consciousness. We have got nothing in common with the skinners of our lives and dreams within and beyond the border; nothing in common with you.

On the contrary we share tons of similarities with the exploited ones of this world, the ones you have set out to indoctrinate us to hate, because they have a different origin, language, religion etc. Against your nationalistic poison we counterpose internationalist solidarity, the common struggle of all exploited persons against the lords of this world. The sabotaging of the local war-machine constitutes our own contribution to this internationalist struggle.

We object to staffing your killing machine that caters for the preservation of your interests within and beyond the terrain called greek state.

We object to becoming food for bombshells.

We object to becoming numeric figures in the geo-strategic partitions during the signing of "peace" / "war" treaties.

We object to staffing one of the most fundamental mechanisms of the state set up for the establishment and reproduction of existing dominance and exploitation relations.

We object to serving the barbarism and the further becoming bestial of this world, either through the increasing militarization of daily life during times of "peace", or through our participation in all sorts of, national cleansing-, genocide-, rape-, annihilation- and assassination expeditions in times of "war".

We object to contribute to a tenebrous future for any of our class brothers and sisters that have coincidentally been born outside the field dominated by our peer nationality class- enemies.

We object to guarding borders and homelands, which the only thing they serve for is to divide people.

We are uniting our voices with the voices of thousands of other total army objector comrades within and beyond greece, who have fought and/or keep on fighting against militarist barbarity, even under much harder circumstances than the ones we're faced with at present.

Therefore, don't count on us!

Or better explained, if there is something you should count us for, this is solely the following:

Count us as your own social and class enemies.

Thessaloniki - Ioannina / September 2011

Alexis Kosmas, Vangelis Zikos, Michalis Tolis, Chrisanthos Stathas

## Statement of total objection to army

We were called to perform our military service in a time of crisis and intense social and economic contention. It had been a long time since we had taken a stand with our contribution to building up social resistance in every neighborhood, workplace and against any attempt to subjugate young people and subordinate social groups . While the extreme right-wing rhetoric is noticeably on the rise, today it is necessary for us all to keep our dignity alive and strengthen, with our discourse and practice, the fight against any form of power, in every facet of our lives.

So, when we too received our call-up papers, we couldn't do anything else but refuse to enlist. The reason for our practical stand against the army and militarism is clear: the army constitutes one of the principal weapons of the ruling classes to perpetuate the reproduction of their power. Besides being a tool for the capital expansion abroad, it is also the main tool of the ruling classes in the interior, a tool to ensure the smooth exploitation of the subordinate. We refuse to be the "guarantor" of the Greek capital's expansion (and let them try to describe this process with attractive terms such as "investment", "Exclusive Economic Zone delimitation" etc.) but we also refuse to turn into potential suppressors of the exploited, ie of our own selves.

The mandatory conscription, especially now that the state employs the rhetoric of internal enemies and becomes a state of emergency, sharply defines the dividing lines among the exploited of the whole world and infects the social body with the ideas of nationalism, racism, sexism, individualism and blind obedience. Our position in the social struggle, however, is on the side of the exploited, those who produce the world's wealth and not on the side of those who dominate. Therefore, the refusal to serve this institution is a position of

principle, as the army produces the barbarism and brutality of war and maintains existing social relations at the expense of the majority of the society.

At the same time, in a time of economic crisis, when increasingly larger parts of the society are driven to misery, we consider excessive military spending to be provocative. That shows the leading role the army plays in ensuring social peace and suppressing any attempt of the exploited for another, more equitable society. From our perspective, sabotaging the militaristic machine is a clear internationalist - class choice and so is defending the ideas of peace, freedom and equality among peoples.

The choice of total objection is anything but random. Our goal is not to avoid military service (there were many alternative 'side-door' means to do that) but to create the conditions for an unyielding, mass movement against the state and its mechanisms, breaking the silence the society keeps. With this choice we do not only turn against the army itself, but also against the militarization of our everyday life, bringing forward our own vision, that of solidarity, internationalism, dignity and social emancipation.

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Angelos D., Sotiris K., Stefanos N.

## Collective statement of total objection to army

This declaration is a collective public statement of total objection to military service. What does this mean? It means that we refuse to enlist to the army. We want to make our objection publicly, under our own names, not only because we do not want to hide, but because we also want to encourage others to declare their objection. It means that we are not looking for individual solutions for each one of us separately, but we are seeking ways of collectively responding to the problems that the capitalist system produces. It also means that we are not merely trying to avoid military service, but we want to oppose the institution of the military as a whole - what it represents, protects and reproduces.

This is not an easy task. Both the Left and Right of this country have unanimously presented the role of the greek conscript army as an obvious, necessary and accepted part of domestic affairs (despite years of dictatorships and juntas that committed terrible crimes in greece in the last century). Our friends, family, neighbours, enemies and military judges will all ask: Why will you not go to the army?

In a society flooded with charity events, humanists, intellectuals, democrats, christians, Non Governmental Organisations to suit every taste, avid supporters of the "condemn-violence-from-whenever-it-may-come-from" doctrine and soppy lunchtime TV shows about everyday "human suffering", how is it possible that the existence of the military is considered so obvious, whereas objection to it is not? Is it not because democrats export weapons at the same time as boring us with quotes from Voltaire? And is it not those 'neutral' scientists who make sure some of these weapons are deadlier than others? Is it not christians who 'bless' these weapons to guard their business interests? And is it not the same philanthropists and charitable ladies who fund the care of underaged refugees coming from countries that their husbands and their armies have 'democrasised' by firing "humane" bombs? If we're not mistaken, aren't all the above intrinsically linked to state power and capital?

We want to reverse the question and ask: Why should we go to the army? We get a variety of different answers to this question. From the most typical ideological ones: "You should join to serve country and nation and defend it against its age old enemies. Anyone who doesn't join is a traitor!" To the more modern approach which appears more innocent and cynical: "What's the big deal, you won't really have to go to war anyway, times have changed, it will be a laugh. And ok, it's a waste of time but it's compulsory, you have to go, there's no other way. We all went, were we all idiots?"

We respond by saying that as part of the lower ranks of this society, we stay away and stand against the ideological constructs of "national unity" and "patriotic duty". We've learned that "national defense" translates as "the bosses' appetite". Which war ever called itself 'aggressive', and which ruler ever said "slaughter each other to serve my interests"? Fortunately, we realised early on that war is not a thing of the past, but a constantly present, ubiquitous solution for restructuring the system, especially at times of crisis. We can also see that at times of 'peace' (meaning times of ongoing social war where bombs

are replaced by systematic impoverishment), military service has many reasons to remain obligatory. And none of them are for our own good. Under these terms, the role model of the harmless, respectable and law abiding individual is not one that appeals to us. It is certainly not the right model to bring about change... So the argument that we should go to the army so that we don't get into trouble with the law is not at all convincing. In fact, it is better to get into trouble with the law, because that way we avoid much worse things. Like chasing migrants at the borders alongside Frontex's murderers, or offering our labour for free and therefore devaluating our class further, or being trained to obey and submit, or even serving a mechanism that can at any point be used to oppress an uprising like that of December 2008. Back in December 2008 we chose which side we were on- that of revolt, (and we will do so again at the next uprising). This is the path that our political stance and class consciousness dictate. And following this path, it is possible that total objection to military service can become a political demand supported by a wider movement.

Our political stance means that we will not enlist to the greek, or any other army, and we do not need any official supporting documents, other than this statement to make our position clear. We turn our backs on all individualised solutions, even the more dignified ones (like claiming incapacity, anonymously deserting or using contacts to get out of doing the service). We want our political demand to be universal within and beyond state borders. And since we are not demanding just the abolition of military service or the greek army, but the abolition of all armies on the face of the earth, what could we propose to another countrys' national where there is not even the option of claiming incapacity in order to avoid military service? We also do not want to try our luck with any alternatives to military service. Not only because we do not accept the state punishing us for our ideals by sending us to places far from home to work for free without the right to unionise. Nor because the military's Conscience Inspection Committees' standards are impossible to meet (in keeping with the military's brutalising character, even comrades who have tried to be recognised as conscientious objectors have been rejected). But mainly because we don't want to serve the military or the Ministry of Defense in any way, irrespectively of the degree of involvement and whether we are holding a gun or a mop. We feel that actions such as our total objection are a genuine contribution, not to the vague 'social whole' that alternative service claims to serve, but to all those oppressed in this system. It is exactly these kind of small and bigger objections that

if collectivised and merged with other struggles within society, and placed in a decisively anti-systemic framework, can lead to our overall emancipation and to a classless society. Is there anything better than an action that contributes, even slightly, to such a beautiful cause?

We follow on from the growing number of public statements of objection to military service and we collectively sign our own. We see this objection as part of a wider field of objections and social resistance. From the struggle in Skouries against the gold mines to strike actions. In this respect, any criticism from the Left accusing us of acting as heroes should also say the same about anyone taking part in any kind of struggle that risks imprisonment or prosecution (like the residents of Skouries in Chalkidiki remanded in custody). Why do they not accuse us of heroism when we struggle in our workplace with the risk of losing our jobs, or when we take part in self-organised unions or squatted political centres?

In addition, there could not be a better time to cosign such a statement. The state and its' militarists are constantly increasing their preventative and punitive prosecution of antimilitarists. Talk of increasing the duration of military service, and the increase of military trials, arrests, transfers, and fines aim to further militarise society and halt our antimilitarist action. It would therefore, be a tragic mistake to put our foot on the break now. Let's be honest. After a period of relative flexibility on issues around military service, the first measures put forth by the authorities, (like the establishment of a 6000 EURO fine for failing to enlist) may not have been enough to make us rethink our decision, but was still a heavy blow. But two years later, at the aftermath of the recent wave of prosecutions, our decision is more solid and final than ever. A few high ranking officials have been irritated in the process, and we are very happy about that.

It's in our hands, to prevent the wave of total objection from weakening, to strengthen it so that it reaches more and more people, until the antimilitarist movement uses its dynamism to change the power balance. So that those who refuse to enlist do not have to justify themselves. But those who do want to enlist and join the militarists who will enthusiastically celebrate that fact that there are always some fools to fill the ranks, have to justify themselves instead.

And to finish, let's take a look at the military oath which illustrates what we have to believe in in order to enlist (or at least what we have

to pretend to believe in, as many of our friends and comrades chose to do for reasons that were beyond them):

"I pledge to be loyal to the Homeland. To obey the Constitution, the Laws and the States' legislation. To submit to my superiors. To carry out orders willingly and without argument. To loyally and devotedly defend the Flag with every last drop of my blood. To never abandon or part from it. To observe all military laws. And to conduct myself as a loyal and conscientious soldier."

Because there is not a single word in the above paragraph that is not degrading for human dignity, freedom and self-determination, we would rather take the following, paraphrased "oath", a promise to ourselves and our comrades:

We do not pledge to be loyal to any country.. We do not obey any Constitution, law or legislation of any State, when these are against our interests, the interests of our communities and our class. We will not submit to our 'superiors'. We will not carry out their orders willingly and without resistance (not even sheep would do that). We will not loyally and devotedly defend any flag under which the members and supporters of the bourgeoisie have exploited, suppressed, murdered, humiliated and raped thousands of our proletarian brothers and sisters within and beyond the states' borders, whether in the battlefields or in the daily social struggle in neighborhoods, streets and workplaces.

And as far as our last drops of blood are concerned, we will keep them firmly in our veins so that we can live, be joyful, be sad, fight for our collective emancipation, love, but also hate those who deserve it. We will not therefore observe any military laws, but we will fight to abolish them, their legislators, the state and the bosses.

In one phrase: We will not enlist!

Ioannina- Thessaloniki / September 2013

Costantinos Goinitsiotis, Thanos Nedelkopoulos, Dimitris Aggelakis

## Statement of total objection to army

The authorities have notified us, in a timely fashion, that we must serve for the benefit of the nation, we must enlist for their homeland. They wish to teach us how to fight for their homeland. They kid themselves. On March 6th 2014 we chose not to wear the khaki uniforms, we chose not to appear in their military camps. Our choice is political and conscious. We will not become the meat of the greek war machine. The greek army is a mechanism of death, hierarchy, and enforcement, and we are its enemies, its intentional destroyers.

Our behaviors and actions do not compromise with the dominant policy of national unity. We are not a part of the national structure. A structure which, in times of crises and wealth redistribution, in favor of the higher classes, has only one single rhetoric : we all must contribute to the national duty of helping our homeland through the difficult times. They summon us in order to lend our arms in the effort to save the country. However we are not ignorant. We recognize that the army is the ultimate guarantor of the capitalist class, it is the state function with the most destructive potential. From the cretins of the (extreme and center) political Right, to all the shades of the political Left, the stake is the same: The survival of the homeland and the strengthening of national dominion. We will not become part of greek expansionism, that acknowledges the dictatorship of Egypt, that is eager to take part in the Syrian civil war, that defends the interests of greek bosses in the Aegean oil reserves, that is preparing to bury tones of toxic chemicals ,from the syrian war operations, in the Mediterranean sea , as one more evidence of their imperialistic duty. As long as the "quiet" ordinary people turn a blind eye, the participation of the greek state's paramilitary forces in the Srebrenica massacre can remain un-noticed, the engagement of the greek army in NATO's middle eastern campaign can be insignificant, the murders of immigrant workers in the Aegean can be forgotten and the society would become a vast concentration camp. A camp that aims to the devaluation of the work force, death and submission for the "insiders", and the preparation for the forthcoming carnage to the "outside". We are aware of the fact and state that war is perceived by the capitalist system as a productive process, the process of death and destruction. Therefore we declare that we will not fight for no god, no master and no homeland.

We are not from those that forget the meaning of the army and the

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military service. Military service does not just train the male population in the arms and war every time “the homeland is in danger from those of different faith”. It is a cluster of mechanisms. It is the school of total submission to the superiors, thus of blind obedience to hierarchy. It is the school of enforced chores, of lost dignity and self respect. It is the school of free labor for the army and the state, thus of unpaid and free employment. It is the school of behaviors consolidation, the promotion of masculinity and sexism. For some, the army is something different. The shortest school from depression to suicide. The more sensitive people perish that way. Murders of a militaristic mechanism that are never recorded. Victims of a mechanism that knows how to kill without bullets.

For us, the Xupoluto Tagma (Barefoot Battalion), but also for all those that refuse to enlist, the total military enlistment refusal is a position of battle in the social warfare. It is a strategic choice against militarism, and one of its manifestations, the mandatory service, since we recognize that is an institution against the exploited ones. The poisonous cocktail of nationalism, racism, sexism and hierarchy, is a solvent that prepare us for the massacre with our , out of boarder, class brothers. On the other hand we are inspired by the glorious traditions of the local and international workers movement; we try to recapture the essence of the workers struggles that declared : “the proletarians have no homeland”. We are convinced that the anti-militarism and internationalism, we propose, is the only possible defense against the warmongering appetite of the bosses.

Our clear position against the military mechanism constitutes a battle in the context of social competition that we all need to wage as long as we strive for a peaceful world, with no classes, homelands and boarders, racial and civil discriminations. We have chosen to give this fight the only way we know : publicly, collectively and with determination. Before you label us as utopians, we argue that history has proven that it is naïve to believe that there can be a just and peaceful capitalist world. And since we acknowledge that you are not naïve, we are not surprised of your vengeful wrath against us. You consider us your enemies, and are wise to do so.

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K.Sakkas. D Manitsas



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