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Contents

Why the ruling classes are attacking the working class 5
But the Greek ruling class are not simply victims . . 8
Attacking bourgeois democracy 10
The working class are not lying down 11

a major current within the Greek working class. If struggles are to move into an offence phase this will have to change. If it does not, large sections of workers and the poor will repeat the same mistakes of the past – voting for politicians in the forlorn wish that they will bring change, and hoping that these politicians will deliver this through the state. Throughout history, this has led struggles into a dead end. As Bakunin foresaw and as history has showed, using the statist path to try and gain equality and freedom has been "entirely ruinous for the great masses of the people " because this path does not, and never has, abolished class power but simply changed the make-up of the ruling class. In the current phase of the crisis it is imperative that these mistakes of the past are not repeated; because if they are, the situation of the working class not only in Greece, but large parts of the world, will become even more dire.

It is, therefore, not only essential for the Greek working class to continue to fight, but that they are successful in rolling back the vicious assault of the local ruling class and imperialism. This is vital for the working class across Europe and internationally. This is because the austerity measures in Greece are being used by the ruling classes in many countries as a blue print. Indeed, if the Greek working class can win and stop the attacks, they could be an example to the working class across the world; and they could, given the right circumstances, be the catalyst for starting to take working class struggles from a defensive mode, into an offensive one inside and outside of Europe.

cracy in the union, this has often put the brakes on workers' struggles in Greece. The union bureaucracy on several occasions has tried to blunt the struggles of the working class by postponing planned strikes and demonstrations, and hashing out deals with the politicians behind closed doors. While faith in the political system has been waning, some sections of the working class still have a deep belief that the state can be used as an instrument for their benefit; and have failed to see it for what it is: a central pillar of ruling class power. If struggles are to go forward in Greece, this situation needs to change.

Central to this, is the fact that either workers also have to wrestle their unions away from the Socialist Party, including dismantling the bureaucratic layer, and building them into revolutionary organisations; and/or they have to create new revolutionary structures through which they can independently wage battles against the ruling class and imperialism. This means it is vital that movements in Greece begin and continue to organise outside and against the state. Without this, it is unlikely the defensive battles currently being waged will be transformed into offensive ones.

It is also clear that at the root of the problems in Greece is class rule, capitalism and the state system. If the working class are going to defend their interests in Greece and extend their power, these systems have to be attacked and ultimately destroyed. For this to happen workers have to develop a vision of what they will replace the capitalist and state systems with. They also have to use the battles for reforms to build independent working class movements and class pride; in other words a working class counter-power. Being born through and out of struggle, anarchism clearly has something to offer with its tactics of building a prefigurative power based directly on movements and with its vision of a post-capitalist and post-state society defined by direct democracy and self-management, and of an economy based on meeting needs. Despite there being anarchist groupings in Greece, anarchism however is still not

As the crisis in Europe has intensified, class war and imperialism have deepened in Greece. Indeed, the Greek working class has been subjected to further attacks from the local ruling class – comprised of capitalists and high ranking state officials — and imperialist powers. In order to receive the latest 'bailout' from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Central Bank (ECB), a bailout that goes straight to the banks that own most of the Greek state's debt, the Greek state was told by the German, French and US ruling classes to once again reduce pensions by more than 15%, to fully privatise public utilities, to yet again cut social spending, and to implement more wage cuts, including a 22% reduction in the minimum wage. By 2014 it is planned that the Greek state would have cut spending, mostly on social services, by a further 12 billion Euros. All of this has come on the back of earlier rounds of austerity measures and the Greek working class has been under severe pressure: homelessness has been growing at a rapid rate and the unemployment rate has shot past 20%.

Why the ruling classes are attacking the working class

Of course, the ruling classes in Germany and France – who in reality also control the European Union (EU) – have a major interest in demanding their pound of flesh from the Greek working class. Many German and French banks hold the Greek state's debt, through bonds, and it is in their interests to ensure that this debt is paid — even if only part of it. As a result these banks have called on their respective home states to intervene to ensure this happens. Consequently, the German and French states recently unveiled a deal, linked to the latest 'bailout', to ensure a large part of the debt is paid. The main stream media has portrayed this deal as debt relief for the Greek state, but it is not as simple as that. The deal involves banks agreeing

to reduce the value of the Greek bonds they hold. Part of this also includes the banks swapping bonds into new loans to the Greek state. The deal will, in reality, see 93 billion Euros of the latest bailout going to the banks in return for them reducing the value of the Greek bonds they hold by 107 billion Euros. This deal, ultimately, ensures that the banks holding the Greek state's debt will get most of what is owed to them back. Central to this, the Greek state is expected to pay the rest of its debts – and the new value of the bonds – in return: thus ensuring it does not default. As the Russian anarchist Alexander Berkman pointed out, imperialism often involves large companies calling on the powerful states in which they are from "to defend their interests…and protect their profits ". In Greece, a classic example of such imperialism is playing itself out as the French and German states are demanding that the working class pay the banks most of the money that the Greek state 'owes' them, which – despite the so-called deal — includes hefty interest.

Certainly, the German and French states are also playing power politics. By insisting that the Greek state pay the bulk its debt with interest, via extracting it from the working class, these two powers are attempting to demonstrate that they are in control of the EU and that they call the shots. In fact, the French and German states are using the crisis to try to further weaken the peripheral EU states' bargaining power. This is not unusual. Like capitalists, states internationally compete with each other, and more powerful states will always try and subjugate less powerful ones to their will.

But the French and German states are walking a tight rope in terms of their political maneuvering. Unquestionably, they want to demonstrate to the Greek state that they are boss, but they also don't want to completely alienate the Greek ruling class – made up of capitalists and high ranking state officials. Many German and French capitalists have business deals and trading partnerships with the Greek ruling class; and don't want these partnerships completely destroyed. Added to this,

their actions in November, however, the Greek, French, US and German ruling classes have even attacked the hollow democracy that is the Parliamentary system. By simply refusing the right of people to have any say about the 'bailouts', and unilaterally removing Papandreou, they have attacked the basis of even the Parliamentary system of 'democracy'. The fact that there may be even further attacks on any semblance of bourgeois democracy in Greece should also not be ruled out. A recent US Central Intelligence Agency report ominously stated that should the working class continue to heavily resist the austerity measures in Greece, a military dictatorship in that country may become a possibility. Clearly, the liberal notion that democracy and capitalism are intertwined has been proven, yet again, to be a complete and utter fallacy.

The working class are not lying down

Far from accepting the attack on them, the Greek working class have fought back. Since 2008, there have been massive protests. This has included several waves of strikes and a number of periods that have been marked by days of street fighting between the police and sections of the working class. Occupations have also spread to some workplaces. As part of these protests, many people have also experimented and organised through structures of direct democracy, like assemblies. Much hope rests on these experiments developing into sustainable structures. In February 2012, the largest protest in 35 years in Greece also occurred in response to the latest 'bailout' and accompanying attack. It is clear from this that the Greek working class are going to continue to strongly resist. Already their struggle has been heroic.

There are, however, many challenges facing the struggles in Greece. Notably, the major unions are tied to the Socialist Party – the Party currently in power. Linked to a powerful bureau-

ammunition — the Greek state has also been carrying out one of the main tasks it was designed for: organised violence.

Attacking bourgeois democracy

The fact that the Greek, French, German and US ruling classes want to maintain control over the situation in Greece, can be seen by the events that surrounded the position of the Greek Prime Minister in November 2011. At that point, Prime Minister Papandreou appeared to break with the dominant view within the Greek ruling class, which is to stay in the EU and get the working class to pay for the crisis. During November, in a surprise move, he said that he would put whether or not Greece should accept the conditions of the 'bailouts' to a referendum. In doing so, however, he was not acting in the interests of the working class, but in his own political interests: he wanted to remain Prime Minister and to do so he needed some semblance of popular support – support which almost all politicians have lost. Nonetheless, if a referendum had been held most Greeks would have probably resoundingly rejected the conditions of the 'bailouts'. The Greek, French, US and German ruling classes knew this, and immediately put a stop to any idea of a referendum. In the process, they decided that Papandreou was too unreliable and that he needed to go.

As a result, and within days, Papandreou was removed from office, and replaced by the technocrat Lucas Papademos. Papandemos was the ex-head of the Greek Central Bank and has close ties with the ECB, and clearly the German, Greek and French ruling classes felt he would not waiver. While Bakunin pointed out that it is better to live under a Parliamentary system than a dictatorship, he also noted that a Parliamentary system was not freedom: even under a Parliamentary system a minority governs and instructs others what to do through the state. With

the German ruling class in particular has a major interest in ensuring the continuation of the EU, because it benefits from the unequal trade relations that define it. For this to happen, the working class in Greece has to be forced to pay the country's debt – a debt generated by the ruling class. This means the German state does not want to place impossible demands on the Greek ruling class, and will rather get the Greek workers and the poor to pay. This is due to the fact that the German ruling class does not want the Greek ruling class to feel that it is being forced into a corner and that it has an interest in the state not paying its debt at all. Indeed, if the Greek state defaults, it would have to leave the EU and drop the Euro. Other smaller states in the EU with high debts would possibly also follow suit. As part of this, they would have to launch and float their own currencies, which would quickly devalue with regards to the Euro. This would mean German companies would then find it hard to export into these countries, including Greece, because their goods would become expensive in the local currencies. This, the German ruling class want to avoid, and hence their drive to make the Greek working class pay for the crisis; and not the Greek ruling class.

The fact that continued self-interest is driving the French and German ruling classes' position towards Greece, can be seen in the fact that while demanding that the Greek state cut social spending, no demands have been made for it to cut its military spending. The central reason why is that the Greek state is the largest purchaser of weapons from Germany's arms industry and the third largest customer of French military exports. Consequently, the French and German states have placed no brakes on the level of the Greek state's military spending. Thus, the Greek state has continued with high levels of military spending: in 2010 alone it spent 7.1 billion Euros on its military.

The measures that are being imposed on the Greek working class are also being used by the German, French, US and

British ruling classes to undermine the positions of their own respective working classes. Certainly the attack on the Greek working class is being used by these powerful states – and the ruling classes that control them – as a threat in order to ensure workers locally accept smaller wage increases or wage freezes. So across Europe and much of the world, the crisis is seeing austerity measures and a vicious class war, first imposed in Greece, deepening.

But the Greek ruling class are not simply victims

While the Greek state was told, by the major imperialist powers, to attack the working class, it would be a mistake to see the Greek ruling class as victims. Powerful sectors of Greek capital, those centred on the banks, construction, tourism, and the shipping industries, have been highly supportive of the attacks on the working class. This is because they benefit from the associated cheaper labour. Sections of the Greek ruling class, those involved in importing and the financial sector, also don't want to leave the EU, which defaulting would require. This is because they would no longer be in a position to import French and German goods at relatively low prices; and it would be harder for Greek speculators to do business in other areas of Europe. They, therefore, have a major interest in ensuring Greece does not default and that the working class be made to pay for the crisis. Likewise, high-ranking state managers also have an interest in cutting state spending: it ensures the viability of their well-paid jobs. The ruling class in Greece are, consequently, quite willing to shift the burden of the crisis onto the working class. So not only did the Greek ruling class cause the crisis in Greece, through speculating internationally on debt (along with the debt generated from trade imbalances with the likes of

Germany), they then received massive bailouts from the state in 2008 and are now making the working class pay for this.

Of course, the state is being used as a central instrument in carrying out the plan to get the Greek working class to bear the brunt of the crisis. This, in fact, is exactly what the state is designed for. The state is a central pillar of ruling class power; and exists so that a minority can rule over, and enforce its will over, a majority. It is specifically the state's hierarchical nature that allows minorities who seek to rule people (high ranking state officials) and exploit people (capitalists) to achieve their aims. The hierarchical structure of all states also inevitably concentrates power in the hands of the directing elite. States and the existence of an elite are, as a result, synonymous. States are not controlled by all for the benefit of all, but are rather controlled by the ruling class. In providing bailouts to the ruling class, and ensuring the working class pays for those bailouts, the Greek state is being used for the purpose it was designed for: to protect the interests of a minority at the expense of the majority.

When the Greek working class have resisted, the power of the state has also been used by the ruling class to try and crush them. The state as a centralised mechanism of ruling class power has the ability to do this because it also claims a monopoly on the use of 'legitimate' force within 'its' territory; and will use that force when it deems necessary. In the case of Greece this includes using force against people protesting due to growing homelessness, unemployment and cuts in social services. It is this violent, oppressive and domineering nature of all states that have led anarchists to see them as the antithesis of freedom. The brutal reality is that protestors in Greece — demanding a decent life and some semblance of democracy — have ended up victims of the mechanism of centralised minority rule: the state. In terms of trying to silence protestors — whether by baton, tear gas or live