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A Few Words About Kassaveteia Prisons

K.K

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*“The monsters were tried with hunger as a witness,
locked away for a lifetime in involuntary quarantine.
Despair is its revolver and bullets their needs..”*

The road to liberation is long and after every tiring uphill, every sharp turn, every pothole and everything that slowed our movement, we must regroup with tenfold stubbornness. We must march even more militant, and this is because our memory is neither insignificant nor ephemeral. The free moments in the midst of actions remain alive in our minds, the memories of people in whose eyes and words you can see the beauty of a new world, and most importantly, the thoughts about the prisoners, for those who wake up behind bars and barbed wire, remain indelible. For every invisible, for every forgotten...

I have met many such people in the past months. I am referring to the time I was a prisoner in the Kassaveteia Rural Detention Center. There are essentially 4 different prisons operating there, including the juvenile prison, where there are prisoners as young as

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15 years old(!). The prison in question is made up mostly of young Roma who are impoverished, who experience deep poverty, in very difficult family environments, while others have not even had a family since a very young age. And these situations have created in them a petty criminal behavior where, due to the vindictiveness of the state and civil justice, they are sent to prison. People who don't even know how to read a sentence, who haven't understood basic things about how the world works, let alone the state, who have a major conscience deficit in the majority of them, find themselves imprisoned without any hope, subjected to daily irony from the guards and hearing phrases like: "when you steal, it's okay, now you're in pain?" or "do dogs become people, kid?"

In general, this particular prison is difficult in terms of smooth and calm coexistence. Due to the young age of the prisoners and the lack of conscience as mentioned above, a permanent chaotic situation prevails with shouting, fighting, and excessive violence between the prisoners, which most of the time functions as a tool for breaking out and escaping from confinement and the accumulated anger they have. It was obviously quite difficult for them to understand that the real enemies are those who oppress us, the cops, the prison guards, the politicians, the prosecutors and the ruffians. Which does not surprise me at all, as for some prisoners there the path of ruffianism -snitching inside the prison seemed easier than the path of dignity. This is not new, in all prisons the power of this authority was the ruffians who talk to the service and keep it informed of what is happening and what is about to happen on the part of prisoners. However, without wanting to justify certain behaviors, I believe that in Kassaveteia these were done completely unconsciously since they could not even understand what they were doing by operating in this way. Besides, the world of domination has always operated with the logic of "divide and conquer" and it looked to instrumentalize such people, weak beings who either did not understand how to resist, or never dared to.

However, the difficult situation there is not in the uniqueness of the inmates compared to other prisons (age, educational, conscience, racial differences), but in the conditions and the minimal benefits in general. The prisoners there are completely cut off from the outside world, they live in a ground-floor structure that has 4 cells that are separated by walls. Each cell can hold 10 people, often for quite some time they were loaded with more, there are miserable sanitary conditions and sleeping without the disturbance of dozens of bedbugs is almost inevitable, the window of each cell overlooks the concrete courtyard, where when someone goes out, all they can see is the sky, the walls and the barbed wire. There is not even a sense of where you are since you can't see anything.

At the same time, the prisoners were deprived of contact with their people, since the only way to communicate, besides visiting hours, is through payphones in the courtyard that are barely functional, in fact, for 3 months, there was only one payphone for 50 people. The non-existent possibility of autonomy is even more pronounced as cooking utensils, food, etc. are prohibited, so the prisoners cannot cook (something that is given in many prisons), resulting in their dependence on the basically miserable prison meals.

An unbearable and disgraceful condition was established for the prisoners, which day by day it was more and more imperative that something has to be done. So initially we integrated our objections, our hardships, the essential communication regarding our living into the daily conversations between us. Slowly, some protests were made by prisoners gathered in the courtyard regarding the unacceptable and lack of telephone communication, and their demand that the remaining broken pay phones be reinstalled. In fact, some even took a spontaneous stance of refusing to get locked in their cells and staying in the courtyard, despite the threats of the prison guards, which sometimes even evolved into beatings in a room without cameras. When these had escalated sufficiently, the service began to take an apologetic stance, using the pretext of the general obstructionism of the ministry and the

telephone communication agencies regarding the restoration of the devices we requested. After a while, attempts were made again to gain ground on the part of the prisoners. In this context, after much talk and persistence, mobilizations for better food were carried out. A mass abstention from the rations was organized, abstention from the count and refusal to lock the cells by a large part of the prisoners, while mattresses were set on fire in the courtyard as a sign of protest. After intense pressure, the service relented, within a short time a hired cook was appointed by the ministry and there was a qualitative upgrade in the food.

These events affected some prisoners, it was the first time that they experienced conditions that testified that our existence in this world, only we can make it feel more like life. And that there is nothing more vital than resistance despite the risks and exposure it entails. Accordingly, these mobilizations in this particular prison were unprecedented for the service, so I think it made the guards understand that this feeling of their omnipotence does not remain invulnerable, and will exist as long as the oppressed allow it. I believe that even with these small-scale events, they realized that they are on the wrong side of history, that they should never go to their “work” in peace, because the rage is growing, because the rage for liberation cannot be contained with any wall, and it makes no concessions, it will pass over them if necessary. Indicative of this rage was a phrase uttered by a gypsy prisoner, at some point when the hooded men of the ΟΠΚΕ(Crime Prevention and Suppression Team) had entered the courtyard with the intention of conducting an inspection. “In magaf haspi, caliarde bloodthirsty si...Dele mo” which means “I don’t want peace, the cops are bloodthirsty...Take em all, huh”. This has enormous value for me, for emotions against oppression to emerge from impoverished individuals, and for them to find life again within themselves. Therein lies the importance of resisting and creating cracks in the existing misery.

It is essential to note, however, that none of this came easy, keeping a fighting stance within the walls requires enormous per-

severance. Because quite simply, you don’t only have the service and the state against you, but also several ruffians, individuals who may have incitement from the prison guards themselves to do you harm. It takes constant readiness, unwavering methodicalness and a clear code of values to walk there upright.

Of course, solidarity from the outside plays a very important role in this, this thing gives you height, enough to see beyond the walls, even mentally. It is a terrific feeling, to wake up in a cell even stronger, more and more determined to turn things upside down. I can say with certainty that this also contributed to the end of the mobilizations. Therefore, it is proven that support for political prisoners, among other things, is also a foundation for the future struggles of the oppressed prisoners, it is a kindling for the fiery conflagration that will turn cells, walls, prison guards and the scheming power-mongers into ashes and cinders.

Another world is possible, as long as we have the desire to fight for it, to be able to imagine it, to be able to believe in the cause. And wonderful moments will arise, not at some “terminal” stage, but in our walk towards freedom, every day that we resist, as we explore the paths of emancipation, the beauty of domination less existence. All we have is ourselves and a commitment to always fight, against resignation and submission. Forward to the destruction of oppression, for brighter and free-er days.

“..the thread of resistance continues to be woven, the flame continues to warm the hearts of the insurgents and anarchy continues to remain alive and dangerous.”

—Dimitra Z., Marianna Manoura

**STRENGTH AND LOVE TO ALL WHO FIGHT
SOLIDARITY TO THE IMPRISONED COMRADES
ABOUT THE AMPELOKIPI CASE
HONOR TO THE ANARCHIST KYRIAKOS XYMITIRIS**