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New Democracy: The New Face of State Violence in Greece

A View from Exarchia as the Showdown Looms

CrimethInc.

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The neighborhood of Exarchia in Athens, Greece is known worldwide as an epicenter of combative anarchism. For many years, anarchists and refugees have worked together to occupy buildings, establishing housing collectives and social centers that provide a variety of services outside the control of the state. Starting in August, the new government has carried out a series of massive raids targeting immigrants, anarchists, and other rebels, while revoking the autonomy previously granted to universities and introducing a wide range of new repressive measures and technologies. Now the government has given all the remaining occupations in Greece two weeks to conclude lease agreements with the owners or face the same fate. This deadline coincides with December 6, a day that anarchists have observed for ten years as the anniversary of the police murder of 15-year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos and the uprising that followed it.

The new governing party of Greece, aptly named New Democracy, is described by some media outlets as “center right,” in con-

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trast to outright fascist parties like Golden Dawn; in fact, New Democracy has adopted much of its repressive and xenophobic agenda directly from the fascist right, while pursuing a neoliberal agenda in service of international finance capital. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, a hereditary representative of the capitalist class whose father was also prime minister, exemplifies the political caste that seeks to destroy the last safeguards protecting workers and poor people while scapegoating those who resist.

In the following interview, an anarchist in Athens details the government crackdown that is unfolding and explores the stakes of the fight. This is nothing less than an attempt to erase and rewrite the history of resistance movements in Greece and around the world—so that the dates November 17 and December 6, on which demonstrators have memorialized those murdered by the police, will instead mark the triumphs of repression—so that the name Black Panthers will not call to mind the grassroots Black organization for self-defense and survival, but rather designate the black-shirts of the new police force tasked with patrolling the subways and tourist areas. Imitating protesters around the world, Greek police are now terrorizing pedestrians in Exarchia by shining lasers in their eyes. All of this underscores the extent to which the gloves have come off: from Chile to Hong Kong, open war is erupting between those who aspire to rule and those who aspire to freedom.

We have anticipated this wave of reaction since the left party Syriza came to power in 2015. Something similar occurred not long ago in Brazil: the Workers' Party (PT) maintained power for years by introducing minor social reforms while pursuing a neoliberal agenda and cracking down on movements for social change, ultimately creating the conditions for the far right to seize the government and take revenge on the general population, culminating in the electoral victory of Jair Bolsonaro. While some leftists see this as a reason to remain loyal to left parties no matter what they do, we see the events in Brazil and Greece as a reminder that no electoral strategy can stand in for the sort of collective horizontal

Our passion for freedom is the core of our solidarity and the foundation of our struggle.

Yet while they could have kept to the safety of their couches, they chose to stand up in the street.

For context, we should recall that in 1995, the police arrested everyone; almost nothing occurred in 1996. At that time, no one could anticipate the explosions that would take place during the Olympic Games in 2004 and on a much bigger scale in December 2008, nor what is to come now.

Again, what can people outside Greece to do support the struggle there?

The neoliberal nation-states and the profiteers they benefit are staying their post-industrial course while forcing a feudal vision on humanity. This is taking place globally—from Greece to Chile, from the United States to China. More than ever in these dark days, solidarity must be our weapon.

If you can come here to help refugees and immigrants, that will be very important, as resources will be stretched ever thinner and the government will intentionally make the conditions that are imposed on them worse. Even if you come simply to do volunteer work, any help to people in these dire conditions is an important act of solidarity; it will also show that people have not forgotten them.

Fundraising will be needed as new measures of repression and punishment here hit home. Please continue to pay attention to what is happening here; don't allow the state to isolate us from our comrades around the world. Demonstrations at embassies—or inside them—will also help.

Above all, as I said in August, the best thing you can do to support the movement in Greece is to organize and fight the state and capitalism wherever you are, regardless of the odds. The anarchist movement has no borders. Learn from our losses and grow stronger. We call on those across the world who share our discontent and our commitment to solidarity to take action. We maintain that their repression, alienation, and prisons can never kill this spirit.

organizing that could one day make us capable of facing down the state.

The repression in Greece gives us an opportunity to reevaluate the effectiveness of current anarchist tactics and strategies in a context where many thousands of people are employing them. We should not blame Greek anarchists for experiencing this repression; the story is not over yet, and as in Chile, this crackdown may ultimately broaden and deepen the movement against the state. At the most, we might hypothesize that this wave of repression illustrates the difficulties of maintaining fixed territory today, when governments fearing for their stability are striking out as hard as they can. The age of ceasefires is over. In the coming years, it will be impossible to defend zones of autonomy without precipitating ever wider uprisings against authority.

International solidarity is an essential aspect of this. We urge everyone to stay abreast of the events in Greece, to support arrestees there, and to carry out solidarity actions at Greek embassies and elsewhere.

The interview follows.

We last spoke in August. What has happened since then?

Since August, the Greek state has exceeded general expectations. It's hard to know where to begin in listing the incidents of brutality and terror it has visited upon the anarchist movement, targeted minorities, and all those excluded or at odds with the new administration over the past three months.

What happens next will surely overshadow the intense repression that has already occurred. Every morning I wake up to news of another squat evicted, another person beaten or arrested. We are seeing a new campaign of repression in which an emboldened right wing seeks revenge for the years under a left government, ironically focusing on those who were outside and against the Syriza

administration. Syriza also carried out repression, but it utilized a more complex, deceptive, and indirect strategy.

Some older anarchists describe what is happening now as nothing more than a return to the days before Syriza. Yet confronting the swift and relentless assault on our movement and infrastructure, even those who have been around since the resurgence of the anarchist movement in Greece in the 1980s admit that this may exceed all the previous waves of repression since the far-right military junta that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974.

The state is hitting from every angle. It is attempting to destroy the anarchist movement, but it is also attempting to revoke the remaining freedoms that have made Greece unique relative to other western nation-states. “Law and order” is the banner beneath which this administration is carrying out this campaign of revenge.

Things could be worse. This sort of state violence is the norm in the United States; far more brutal repression is taking place elsewhere in the world. I simply aim to report on the situation in Greece during these dark days, particularly in Athens. I affirm my solidarity with the struggles unfolding from Chile to Hong Kong in response to capitalist restructuring across the world. I hope to inspire more solidarity and to make sure that the story of what is happening here does not go untold.

As of November 20, the so-called “Ministry of Citizen Protection” has officially given all squats remaining in Greece fifteen days’ notice to vacate or face forceful eviction. [Today, the media has published a map of the squats under threat here.] In the statement, they exhort occupiers to contact the owners to make lease agreements and allege that immigrants will be moved to “inland accommodations.” While most squatted buildings are owned by the state, even in cases in which the owners have not made moves to evict squatters, government officials have pressured them or fabricated justifications for eviction such as accusations of drug dealing or weapons-making. Considering that most squats maintain strict anti-drug policies and are clearly aware enough of the risk of immi-

a inflict a bloodbath. At a dinner party in a village prior to November 17, a police commissioner was heard to say that he would be surprised if the police didn’t kill anyone that day. They didn’t get to kill anyone on November 17, though video footage of beatings shows their readiness to do so—so who knows what they will attempt on December 6.

From what I saw on November 17, I think they will double down on violent repression. They will be out in full force; they will make preemptive arrests and beat anyone on the streets of Exarchia that night. I think they will permit a daytime demonstration in memory of Alexis to maintain the façade of democracy, but, as they did on November 17, they will surround all the anarchists and respond brutally if anyone tries to get out of line.

I don’t know what December 6 will bring, but I know that the memory of Alexis and the way his death touched the lives of so many generations is far more powerful than the self-interested agendas of politicians like Mytsotakis who were born with silver spoons in their mouths.

Overall, I think that the purpose of the resources that they are investing in repression is chiefly to keep the base of New Democracy voters distracted from the broader economic and social issues at play in Greece today. I think the state’s resources will be focused so much on crushing the anarchist movement and torturing immigrants that eventually Greek civilians will realize once again that the precarity they are subjected to has not changed. This is by no means guaranteed—as you see with Trump supporters in the states, outright fascism offers some very efficient methods of deception and control.

I think the movement will have to struggle harder in these dark days, but I believe that in the long run, we will grow stronger as a result of these challenges. People continue to organize and act; despite the fear, we are still in the streets. The hundred or so people sparking small clashes inside the square of Exarchia on November 17 were like a David without a slingshot facing a Goliath in a tank.

Still, some anarchists tend to approach them as distinct subjects rather than as comrades with whom to build something collectively. There are exceptions to this—for example, in the participation of immigrants who made connections with anarchists who set out to support them during the so-called “refugee crisis.” Still, lines of separation remain that may hinder revolt from spreading further.

Despite these issues, the anarchist movement is very strong. People are nervous at this moment, but fear is an obstacle that every struggle must overcome. Regardless of this fear, people are continuing to organize, trying to overcome divisions and external obstacles bit by bit. Exhaustion and cynicism can be inevitable when the state hits you hard and takes everything from you, but the anarchist communities of Greece will never be eradicated. Too many people here have struggled, suffered, and found safety and community in anarchy.

Also, while we should identify our weaknesses and errors and the ways we can improve, the blame for this repression rests on the state and its puppets. At the moment, the police and their masters have all the cards in their favor; they are cowards who can flaunt their expensive weapons in public with no risk of legal repercussions. Our response, our resistance, is grounded in the strength of our spines and the courage of our hearts. The state currently has the advantage, but I don’t think we should blame ourselves for this; as conflict is intensifying around the world, it is to be expected that the state strategy will escalate here. In Greece, new elements of revolt will emerge as we are pushed into a corner.

The repression that is taking place now is unique in our experience, but they can never crush our spirit. They are punching a lion inside a cage; eventually, the lion will break out.

What is at stake going into December? What are the dangers? And are there any new opportunities, if people could shift strategies?

Anticipating the anniversary of the murder of Alexis Grigopoulos on December 6, I expect the police will attempt to

raids to know the risks of manufacturing weapons, these accusations are blatantly dishonest. Fabrications like this also provide excuses to evict squats like Lelas that have been occupied for over 20 years, regardless of whether there is pressure from their owners or precise evidence of illegal activity. Under the prosecutors appointed by New Democracy, housing protection laws no longer pose any obstacle to the current regime.

As for the “inland accommodations” for immigrants, this is clearly a reference to concentration camps. When we completed the last interview in August, only about 150 immigrants were reported to have been evicted during the raids of August 26. Today, well over 500 immigrants have been evicted, according to the official numbers. The squats housing refugees that have been evicted since August 26 include the fifth high school of Athens in Neapoli, an unnamed squat on the outskirts of Omonia, Hotel Oneiro squat in Exarchia, and the Clandestina squat in Exarchia.

The people who have been kidnapped from these squats by the state were transferred to detention centers or taken to concentration camps far from the public eye. Many people have been turned away from these camps due to overcrowding, leaving them homeless and vulnerable to human trafficking and attacks from fascists and police. The housing inside these camps is reportedly little better. Many stories have gone unheard; communication has been lost with many of those taken.

Some of those evicted from Clandestina refused to board a bus to one of these camps; the police stole their papers and forced them to walk back 10 miles in the pouring rain without knowing where they would go. It is becoming common for police to steal the documents of refugees or immigrants who resist, which complicates future police encounters. Conditions in the camps are overcrowded and unhygienic; fascist groups have pelted refugees and immigrants with rocks and organized pork barbecues outside the camps in hopes of offending those they assume to be Muslims. This week, the government released a plan to further curtail procedures

that welcome refugees while funding new concentration camps in abandoned schools or unused land far from cities and tourist destinations.

On November 2, police raided and evicted the 14-year-old squat known as Vancouver located near the Economics School of Athens, arresting four people, planting drugs on the premises, destroying the interior, kidnapping several dogs, and boarding up the building with cats trapped inside it. Following a hunger strike by a member of an animal liberation group and legal pressure, officials permitted a person to scale the bricks of the building and release the cats that the police had intended to starve to death as a form of punishment. Vancouver was beloved by a variety of anarchists, transcending some of the divisions that have plagued the movement here. It was also the first formally anarchist squat to be evicted.

Outside of Athens, in Larisa, the Palmares squat was evicted. In Thessaloniki, where fascists had burned down the squat Libertatia during nationalist demonstrations regarding the name of Macedonia in January 2018, the squatters had almost finished reconstructing the building; police attacked them, arresting four people and forcing the occupants to break off reconstruction on the absurd grounds that they were “destroying” a historic site.

Originally, the government declared that all occupations were to be evicted by November 17, the anniversary of the day in 1973 when the Greek military junta attacked the Polytechnic University in Exarchia with a tank, murdering dozens. Now that this deadline has passed, the new statement from the government announces that all occupations will be evicted by December 5, one day before the anniversary of day Greek police officers murdered Alexis Grigropoulos, an unarmed 15-year-old, in Exarchia. Both dates were clearly chosen as provocations, explicitly affirming the murders of young civilians that the Greek state has carried out and aiming to suppress the movements that memorialize them.

The government has rapidly channeled a great deal of additional resources to the police specifically for the purpose of attacking im-

system. Although in theory, the repeal of the asylum laws on the universities could offer grounds for anarchists and leftists to unite against a common enemy, it is very hard to imagine the left and anarchists unifying against the right wing and the institutions of the state. On the contrary, the left wants to reclaim the state, not to destroy it. The problem with this was evident when many people stopped participating in mass mobilizations at the high point of their potential in 2012, anticipating that Syriza would come to power and fix things; as a consequence of this demobilization, people were not prepared to compel Syriza to follow through on its promises, which contributed to the disillusionment that enabled New Democracy to come to power.

At the same time, there are other issues relating to the isolation of the movement, and the gulfs between groups within the movement itself.

One issue is that the movement has been able to count on large enough numbers to be self-sufficient, with the consequence that it can also be insular. Additionally, while people have built a great deal of infrastructure over the past several years, a lot of division has also resulted as a consequence of infighting, as people have remained loyal to their chosen assembly, crew, or team in disputes without finding ways to resolve them. This happens everywhere in the world; unfortunately, in Greece, it has enabled the state to skip directly to the “conquer” phase of their “divide and conquer” strategy, seeing how much division already exists.

In the United States, due to the diversity of the society and the comparatively small proportion of self-proclaimed anarchists in the population, it appears that anarchists are forced to discover affinities with other angry people or struggling communities who may not claim precisely the same identity or political affiliation. This is a good thing.

Of course, in Greece, there are efforts that involve collaborating with refugees, immigrants, and working-class or excluded Greek people, and these have created beautiful relationships and projects.

the Greek police have been more heavy-handed and arguably less systematic.

It's important to remember the history of Greece to understand how the state functions here. Since the fall of the junta, the anarchist movement in Greece has not faced the extreme degrees of repression seen in the US in the McCarthy era, when the FBI cracked down on everyone with left or anarchist views. The abandoning of any pretense of democracy and legal rights is taking place suddenly and swiftly. It has surprised many people here.

Yet when we consider everything that has happened elsewhere over the past two decades, from the militarization of police to the dismantling of the safety nets that formed the basis of the previous social contract, it seems inevitable that this was going to happen—especially taking into account how rapidly changes go global these days. In any case, we can hope that the fighting spirit here, which has emerged from so many experiences of struggle, will ultimately adapt, grow, and overcome.

Why do you think it has been possible for the state to carry out this repression? Is the anarchist movement isolated? What are *other* people in Greece doing right now? What are people outside the anarchist movement focusing on?

The anarchist movement was prepared for a big shift to come when ND was elected. However, few anticipated such a scorched earth approach. The movement is very different here than it is in the US. Proportionate to the population, it is huge, as I've said; however, it is isolated in some ways that may be unhelpful to our struggles.

Anarchists and the left have a tense relationship. The left here is openly authoritarian and complicit in many aspects of the current

facing the same lawsuit system that exists in the USA. It is very uncommon to sue here, and it would be unlikely that such a charge would be taken seriously if the beating occurred during a demonstration. Even if a lawsuit succeeded, the compensation would be much smaller than what one might win in a lawsuit against police in the United States.

migrant communities in Athens and crushing the anarchist and squatter movements. Syriza had suspended the Delta police, the roving motorbike force used to beat and terrify demonstrators in Exarchia, relying instead on MAT police. Now 300 new Delta police have been established under a new name, OPKE, which can be translated as “crime prevention and repression teams.” They are officially in the streets again.

New Democracy has also created a new police force inside the subways and tourist areas of Athens, embarrassingly called the Black Panthers on account of their black uniforms. Transportation regulation and fare enforcement have already become stricter; now there is a police force for this reason alone. The MAT police, the riot police units that repress demonstrations, stand guard to prevent people from reoccupying evicted squats, attack demonstrations, and surround the neighborhood of Exarchia every day, have also been increased by an additional 1500 members. These increased numbers were first visible on November 17.

Police officers on the streets are visibly emboldened. I have seen officers openly harassing women; they threaten anyone they suspect might be their enemy. Their brutality is intense and amazingly random. In grotesque appropriation of the tactic protesters have used in Hong Kong and Chile to keep riot police at a distance, officers have been using laser pointers to point out targets in the streets; when they have nothing better to do, they sometimes simply point them at people's eyes. This has happened to me and to other people I know.

Being near a clash, regardless of your participation in it, is justification enough for officers to attack you with physical force; facing no legal risk, they are seeking to exert maximum force against the general population. Individual officers take pride in the power that has been vested in them to do this. A well-known anarchist was recently arrested in the square of Exarchia for simply sitting. The police pulled his clothing down and sexually assaulted him while telling him “the junta is back.”

Significant changes in repression have also been made into policy. For example, the government has extended the minimum sentence for those convicted on terrorism charges from 17 years to 22, while stiffening the conditions of release and intensifying the penalties for probation violations. The penalties for rioting and the use of Molotov cocktails have been increased; expanded trespassing laws specifically target protests that enter buildings “unlawfully,” an attack aimed at groups like Rouvikonas who enter buildings when protesting conditions or exploitation by bosses or employers. There are efforts to punish those advocating or reporting on resistance, essentially criminalizing radical content itself. The new government aims to modernize the apparatus and practices of state repression in Greece so they will compare with those of the United States. The officials appointed to the Ministry of Civilian Protection have consulted with various foreign agencies, including the FBI. They are investing in new technologies including drones and cyber-surveillance.

Police have brought back additional methods of intimidation and surveillance at full force. Officers have shown up at the homes of accused anarchists before demonstrations to intimidate them—a tactic they employed under Syriza, but less often and less intensely. Anarchists have found GPS tracking equipment attached to their vehicles and seen cameras stationed in cars outside their homes. Two nights ago in Exarchia, anarchists noticed a vehicle containing badly camouflaged surveillance equipment parked outside the offices of Class Counterattack and the Mikro cafe. When they went to photograph the car, dozens of riot police swarmed the area, escorting two undercover officers as they moved the vehicle.

On November 8, police carried out anti-terror raids targeting over a dozen houses alleged to be the residences of anarchists connected to the group Revolutionary Self-Defense. The authorities claim to have seized an array of weapons including guns used in prior attacks against the Mexican embassy and the headquarters of PASOK, the socialist party, which is the location of one of the main

which 300 partygoers were held at gunpoint by black-clad police looking for drugs. What is going on is not just a *political* war on immigrants and anarchists; it is also a cultural war on the sort of “Mediterranean” freedom that has come to define Greece as a result of slower processes of modernization.² The rigid enforcement of sterile order that defines countries like the USA is the standard that New Democracy hopes to impose on Greece.

In short: neoliberalism at the end of a gun, along with technocracy, church, and tradition. This is what New Democracy means by “law and order.”

How effective has state repression been so far?

Greek anarchists have earned many things with blood. Both Exarchia as we know it and the Greek anarchist movement of today have their origins in blood and courage. Anarchism is a staple of Greek society that will never be eradicated. Proportionate to the population, I don’t think there is a larger anarchist movement anywhere in the world. While the numbers of anarchists, anti-authoritarians, and autonomists are at an all-time high, repression is taking aim at movement infrastructure, effectively and rapidly changing the game.

A word about the different forms of repression here: what is new here is the technological advances in policing in Greece including surveillance, harsher anti-terror measures, and harsher punishments. The police and court system in the United States are ruthless in their relentless investigations, premeditated repression, and judicial punishment; likewise, US police kill far more people than Greek police—specifically people of color and poor people. On the other hand, police are able to beat people more freely here in response to demonstrations.³ Both systems are brutal; but until now,

² Believe it or not, when the *Joker* film came out, police raided cinemas to check IDs, threatening parents who brought their children to see it that someday they might lose custody of their children as a consequence.

³ This is not because police in the US are more ethical; rather, it is a traditional aspect of police conduct in Greece, in part as a result of Greek police not

to build a new American military base in the city of Alexanderpouli on the border with Turkey. Everything is for sale in Greece as they look to privatize and modernize.

Ironically, while targeting anarchists and immigrants in the name of “law and order,” the state continues to channel the drug epidemic into neighborhoods like Exarchia and the immigrant-dominated Omonia neighborhood. In part, this helps them to maintain the illusion that anarchist and immigrant squats are connected with drug dealing and general criminality, when in fact they represent one of the chief alternatives to them. In this regard, the drug epidemic serves to maintain the status quo. Because it provides a pretext for scapegoating and repression, the government has no real incentive to suppress it. As New Democracy member of Parliament Thanos Plevris¹ said on television, explaining their policing strategy,

“We want Exarchia to return to normal criminality.”

Despite widespread nationalism and racism, Greece has long been known as a lax society compared to Northern Europe or North America. It is famous for drinking outside, smoking inside, and inconsistent law enforcement. European Union standards ban smoking inside; around the country, you can see “no smoking” signs beside tables with ashtrays. Now the authorities are ticketing businesses and threatening their licenses for allowing smoking inside; presumably, the state will use this to target businesses hostile to police or suspected to regularly host anarchists and immigrants.

For the first time in five years, police arrested a person for not paying the fare on the metro. Police raided a nightclub in the Gazi neighborhood of Athens in a sort of vice-style police operation in

¹ Plevris is a classic example of how the politics of the fascist Golden Dawn party have become mainstream in New Democracy. In 2011, he claimed that Greece should use deadly force against refugees trying to cross into Greece and deny immigrants access to food, water, and healthcare.

stations of the MAT riot police in Exarchia. Police arrested three people in these raids; it’s likely that they will experiment with the new punitive measures in prosecuting them. The new prime minister has bragged about these arrests as a victory for the state.

Following the formal abolition of the university asylum policy, police have entered universities such as the School of Economics in Kipseli to evict the occupied social centers known as *stekis*. Police are threatening the *stekis* they have not evicted yet and pressuring university administrators to let them invade the campuses. Inside the universities, right-wing groups such as the Youth Party of the ruling New Democracy party have been emboldened to attack anti-fascists and anarchists, assaulting individuals pasting flyers and openly marching against immigrants.

Demonstrations continue to occur, with small clashes erupting despite the unrelenting assault from all sides. Many anticipated that November 17 would indicate the future of important anniversaries revolutionaries and anarchists have used to foster a tradition of resistance and riot.

November 17, 1973 marked the resurgence of the anarchist movement in the 20th century and the emergence of Exarchia as a zone of anti-police and anti-fascist activity. Most anarchists have observed the anniversary of November 17 by occupying the Polytechnic and honoring the legacy of those murdered by the police. This year, the daytime demonstration that went to the US embassy—since the USA supported the junta in order to keep Greece a right-wing stronghold following a civil war between the left and right—saw one of the largest presences of anarchists in its history. Thousands of anarchists participated in the march in two blocs. Police isolated the larger of the blocs from the rest of the march, with lines of 500 or more riot police walking on both sides of the demonstrators.

In anticipation of the traditional night riots around the Polytechnic in Exarchia, police completely militarized the neighborhood. Roving groups of Delta police operated in groups of ten, while

hundreds—if not thousands—of riot police surrounded the neighborhood. In the past, when operations like this took place, anarchists took to the roofs of Exarchia to fight the police. This year, equipped with drones and new anti-terror measures that enable police to enter buildings without regard for the law, police arrested six individuals and accused them of planning attacks from the roofs.

Amid all this terrifying posturing from the state, despite the odds against them, a few hundred courageous individuals still took the square of Exarchia to try to fight their way through the police to access the blocked off Polytechnic. Additional massive numbers of riot police and Delta police bombarded them with tear gas and stun grenades. An array of videos show officers inflicting heinous beatings to people at random. Many people were seriously injured and currently face weighty charges. We know of 28 arrests in Athens on November 17—six during preemptive daytime measures and 22 during night clashes. At least 31 more people were arrested across Greece as demonstrations involving anarchists occurred in Thessaloniki, Patras, Heraklion, and other cities. The following day, police brutally attacked a march organized in solidarity with the arrestees.

Following an attack on a motorbike belonging to a Delta cop two weeks ago, police attacked a bar frequented by anarchists; failing to enter the bar, they turned on the crowd that had gathered to observe, then roved the neighborhood arresting and beating people at random. The state specifically tasks the most reactionary police with terrorizing Exarchia, usually insecure men from outside Athens—many of whom are involved with the neo-Nazi group Golden Dawn. For them, this is a personal grudge match.

What other factors are shaping the situation besides outright government repression?

While the new administration is playing to its base by using anarchists and immigrants as scapegoats for the anger and misery of post-crisis Greece, capitalists are carrying out an assault on the whole country under the cover of “law and order.” The Orthodox

Church and the proponents of the junta have been forces in Greek society for a long time; but thanks to new opportunities for capitalists, technological advancements, and the exodus of youth abroad looking for work, the reactionaries have gained the upper hand.

As a result of the golden passport policy of the Greek state, in which investing \$250,000 or more automatically obtains the investor citizenship, wealthy Americans, Chinese, Israelis, and Russians seeking EU citizenship are buying up a great deal of Greek real estate. This has been unfolding since the crisis in 2008, but it has accelerated in response to the arrival of the business-friendly New Democracy.

As we discussed in the previous interview, the invasion of Airbnb and ex-pat tech workers able to work remotely has sent rents soaring through the roof and inflated real estate value everywhere. Just as it has in London, Berlin, San Francisco, New York, and Hong Kong, this has driven out or impoverished those who define the very reputation of these renowned cities. Especially in Athens, the culture of the center—including graffiti, cafés, food, and other customs—is being commodified alongside the process of gentrification. We are being turned into a zoo for those can afford to pay for the “Athens experience.” Exarchia is just one instance of a much more widespread phenomenon.

In this context, the evictions of squats and the efforts to pacify neighborhoods are not just a matter of reasserting “law and order”—they are also an essential part of capitalist restructuring. In the past, evicted buildings would sit empty for years, but now there are gentrifiers waiting to take control of them. The police are just the point at the end of the spear; the thrust behind it is the pressure to auction Greece off to the global capitalist class, further impoverishing many locals while rewarding the necessary accomplices.

The new government has hastened to cut taxes for the wealthy and cater to their interests. They recently sold a large portion of the biggest port in Athens to the Chinese government and agreed