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Collective Statement of Total Objection to Military service

Xupoluto Tagma

February 19, 2014

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?

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The statement was “given” by many comrades to the militarists of
the Conscription Office of Ioannina, on 17/02/2014!

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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 sappy 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

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!**

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Ioannina – Thessaloniki, September 2013

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 be-

cause 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."*