

Greece, after the death of three bank workers - What do we honestly have to say about Wednesday's events?

Friday 7 May 2010, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 7 May 2010).

The text below summarises some initial thoughts on Wednesday's tragic events by some of us here at Occupied London - please disseminate.

What do the events of Wednesday (5/5) honestly mean for the anarchist/anti-authoritarian movement? How do we stand in the face of the deaths of these three people - regardless of who caused them? Where do we stand as humans and as people in struggle? Us, who do not accept that there are such things as "isolated incidents" (of police or state brutality) and who point the finger, on a daily basis, at the violence exercised by the state and the capitalist system. Us, who have the courage to call things by their name; us who expose those who torture migrants in police stations or those who play around with our lives from inside glamorous offices and TV studios. So, what do we have to say now?

We could hide behind the statement issued by the Union of Bank Workers (OTOE) or the accusations by employees of the bank branch; or we could keep it at the fact that the deceased had been forced to stay in a building with no fire protection - and locked up, even [1]. We could keep it at what a scum-bag is Vgenopoulos, the owner of the bank; or at how this tragic incident will be used to leash out some unprecedented repression. Whoever (dared to) pass through Exarcheia on Wednesday night already has a clear picture of this. But this is not where the issue lies.

The issue is for us to see what share of the responsibilities falls on us, on all of us. We are all jointly responsible. Yes, we are right to fight with all our powers against the unjust measures imposed upon us; we are right to dedicate all our strength and our creativity toward a better world. But as political beings, we are equally responsible for every single one of our political choices, for the means we have appropriated and for our silence every time that we did not admit to our weaknesses and our mistakes. Us, who do not suck up to the people in order to gain in votes, us who have no interest in exploiting anyone, have the capacity, under these tragic circumstances, to be honest with ourselves and with those around us.

What the greek anarchist movement is experiencing at the moment is some total numbness. Because there are pressurising conditions for some tough self-criticism that is going to hurt. Beyond the horror of the fact that people have died who were on "our side", the side of the workers - workers under extremely difficult conditions who would have quite possibly chosen to march by our side if things were different in their workplace - beyond this, we are hereby also confronted with demonstrator/s who put the lives of people in danger. Even if (and this goes without question) there was no intention to kill, this is a matter of essence that can hold much discussion - some discussion regarding the aims that we set and the means that we chose.

The incident did not happen at night, at some sabotage action. It happened during the largest

demonstration in contemporary greek history. And here is where a series of painful questions emerge: Overall, in a demonstration of 150-200,000, unprecedented in the last few years, is there really a need for some “upgraded” violence? When you see thousands shouting “burn, burn Parliament” and swear at the cops, does another burnt bank really have anything more to offer to the movement?

When the movement itself turns massive – say like in December 2008 – what can an action offer, if this action exceeds the limits of what a society can take (at least at a present moment), or if this action puts human lives at danger?

When we take to the streets we are one with the people around us; we are next to them, by their side, with them – this is, at the end of the day, why we work our arses off writing texts and posters – and our own clauses are a single parameter in the many that converge. The time has come for us to talk frankly about violence and to critically examine a specific culture of violence that has been developing in Greece in the past few years. Our movement has not been strengthened because of the dynamic means it sometimes uses but rather, because of its political articulation. December 2008 did not turn historical only because thousands picked up and threw stones and molotovs, but mainly because of its political and social characteristics – and its rich legacies at this level. Of course we respond to the violence exercised upon us, and yet we are called in turn to talk about our political choices as well as the means we have impropriated, recognising our -and their - limits.

When we speak of freedom, it means that at every single moment we doubt what yesterday we took for granted. That we dare to go all the way and, avoiding some cliché political wordings, to look at things straight into the eye, as they are. It is clear that since we do not consider violence to be an end to itself, we should not allow it to cast shadows to the political dimension of our actions. We are neither murderers nor saints. We are part of a social movement, with our weaknesses and our mistakes. Today, instead of feeling stronger after such an enormous demonstration we feel numb, to say the least. This in itself speaks volumes. We must turn this tragic experience into soul-searching and inspire one another since at the end of the day, we all act based on our consciousness. And the cultivation of such a collective consciousness is what is at stake.

P.S.

* <http://www.occupiedlondon.org/blog/>

Footnotes

[1] See on ESSF on this question: [Greece, after the death of three bank workers – What do we honestly have to say about Wednesday’s events?](#). Red.