



**A Brief History
of the West**



Barricades erected near Taksim Square, Istanbul, June 2013. Total solidarity with the ongoing demonstrations and clashes with the police, the state, and those who seek to run the bulldozer of capitalism over the last bits of green space.

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σὺν Ἀθηνᾶ καὶ χεῖρα κίνει (*with Athena, move also your hand*)

-ancient Greek proverb

Northern Babylon

On the 14th of May, 2013, a group of men and women descended from the mountains of Kurdistan and entered the state of Iraq. They carried AK-47s, rocket propelled grenades, and M-60 machine guns. All of them were guerrillas who had fought for the PKK, the Kurdistan Workers Party. As they entered their bases in Iraq, all of them wore smiles, testaments to the joy of peace, however temporary. For years these men and women had endured a dirty war against the Turkish state as they fought for Kurdish autonomy. This war has been obscured by the media and ignored by the larger world. Over 30,000 guerrillas have been killed during the thirty year war against Turkey and the rebel army has faced constant harassment.

So when a ceasefire was proposed by the imprisoned leader of the PKK, it was met with wide enthusiasm by the soldiers, eager to live without the fear of an ambush, a raid, or an airstrike. The withdrawal of fighters from Turkey began on May 8th, the first step of the ceasefire. When the first jubilant guerillas entered Iraq a week later, the government in Baghdad expressed alarm that this armed force would further destabilize the country, already in the first stages of a new civil war. But the smiling guerrillas have ignored these protests from Baghdad. In their bases in northern Iraq, the fighters have had a moment to relax, wait, and watch the world on satellite TV.

Byzantium

Exactly two weeks after these guerrillas arrived in Iraq, a group of activists began camping under the trees in Gezi Park, a small green area near Taksim Square in Istanbul, Turkey. Gezi Park is on the site of a military

barracks that was demolished in 1940 and turned into green space. The local government and big developers decided to destroy the park in order to build a new structure aesthetically similar to the barracks that would include a mall and luxury apartment. Fittingly, on May 30th, the government sent a large force of riot police to brutally clear the activists from the park to make way for the new form of the old barracks. After the first brutal attack by the police, hundreds of new people joined the protest and were attacked again the next day, triggering solidarity protests in Ankara and Izmir. Gezi Park was sealed off by police, information quickly spread through the neighborhoods and the internet, and the next day, June 1st, thousands of people crossed the Bosphorous River and converged on Taksim Square.

After June 1st, an insurrection spread across Turkey, from the south to the east of its borders. In Istanbul, the police were pushed out of Gezi Park and Taksim Square. Almost immediately a free area was created, buffered from the police by dozens of barricades made from such diverse materials as bricks, metal pipes, and burnt out buses. Underneath the trees and along the pavement, another manifestation of the square movement has appeared in Istanbul, carrying with it all the lessons of Tahrir, Plaza del Sol, Syntagma, and Oakland. Anarchists, muslims, hooligans, communists, republicans, yoga freaks, doctors, teachers, and homeless people are all together, inhabiting this precarious location, strengthening it, preparing for the eventual police or para-state invasion. This diverse multitude of people have together stolen police tanks, burnt cars, thrown molotovs, built hospitals, forged informal supply lines through Istanbul, and built a library.

Erecting a library in the middle of an occupied square is the antithesis of a fascist book burning. It is the affirmation of plurality, multiplicity, and diversity. It is the acknowledgment of disagreement and the recognition of what is shared. It is appropriate that one of the most common chants in Istanbul is “shoulder to shoulder against fascism.” Unlike the previous incarnations of the square movement, there is less squabbling over ideology, less management by assemblies and sub-groups, and a grander sense of solidarity and practicality. For the first time, mainstream society has embraced the Kurdish struggle, feeling a greater sense of shared struggle against the same fascism.

In the face of such an immediately ruthless enemy, all parties to the occupation understand what is at stake. All tasks are undertaken autonomously and organically without the need for endless meetings and processing.

fascist project, from NATO to the Orthodox Church, from Chase Bank to Amazon warehouses in Poland where neo-nazi foreman whip the immigrant workers. But the authoritarian world extends down into parking tickets, laws, and police violence.

Ierissos, with the fish in the sea and the fresh water in the hills, could be autonomous, along with the other nearby villages. There are anti-capitalists who live in Ierissos, and they are surprised and hopeful because of the conversations happening in the village, conversations about food, water, and land. On the other hand, Exarchia is a large residential neighborhood in Athens and Gezi Park is a small place in the middle of Istanbul. They are under permanent siege because of their positions within the metropolis. Both contexts, the small village and the big city, are equally relevant, but some places are more conducive to freedom and others are not, all for various reasons. But as these situations show, having something to defend is the life giving spring of resistance.

Recently, a group of immigrants has formed in Athens, calling itself the Black Panthers. It is a self-defense group that patrols the streets, ready to repel fascist attacks. When Channel 4 from the UK aired a news segment about the Black Panthers and the rise of Golden Dawn, the Ministry of Public Order quickly contacted the media and assured them the Black Panthers did not exist. They claimed this information came from “the African community” and that law abiding immigrants need not fear. The government would protect them.

Immigrants can find protection in the streets of Exarchia and can sit in the parks without fear. However, some people in the neighborhood have dedicated themselves to kicking out people they perceive to be heroin dealers, and in their purges, immigrant junkies have been severely beaten. The police have tried to funnel heroin addicts into the neighborhood for decades, but an addict is not a dealer, and these assailants have acted indiscriminately in the past. It is a very fine line to walk, but it is a reflection of the times.

Stopping fascist attacks would require a large and disciplined force to be on every street corner. Fascists attack quickly with knives and bats and disappear just as quickly. Anyone who takes on the fascist threat also must deal with the police. As the anarchists of Athens have learned, the government will not only destroy their infrastructure while the fascists stab immigrants, they will sponsor those same fascists. The situation is a twisted and stressful nightmare for everyone trying to reverse it.

Just down the street from the Polytechnic is a self-managed café run by anarchists. Inside they charge 4 or 5 euros for a hot meal with bread. Down the street are four homeless people camped out on the sidewalk. At the café there have been endless conversations about what is happening. Some people say, “We have burnt down the city 70 times. We are nowhere better, we are in a worse place. Autonomous self-organization and anti-fascism are the only concerns now.” This type of sentiment is fairly common, although an over-whelming sadness is also common. No one likes to dwell on the sadness, but it is definitely there.

Autonomous self-organization is a way to describe the places and projects described in this article. It is a very general description for people taking care of themselves without the state. Anti-fascism, despite how simplistic it can be, is an expression that should mean destroying the whole of the authoritarian world. The capitalist order is fascist in the grandest sense. Anti-fascist research alone has done enough to reveal the scope of the

Perhaps it is because the occupation started under conditions of war, not peace.

Many western journalists have seized on the comparison between the occupation in Istanbul and the Paris Commune. Fueling this comparison are the barricades, the nerves of the occupation. After the crushing of the Paris Commune, Frederic Engels discoursed on the nature of barricades, decrying them as pointless against a modern military force, equipped with artillery shells that could instantly destroy one of these simple obstructions. Seeing street fighting as futile and destined for failure, he suggested that the revolutionary forces of Europe attempt to enter the various parliaments and achieve power legally. He entirely missed the point of the barricade.

Throughout time, whenever a free area is created, whether it is in Paris or Istanbul, the people begin to build their world using whatever tools are at their disposal. This task in itself, requiring the use of one's own hands, is the first step toward freedom. Building a barricade is not a simple military tactic. It is a commitment, pledged with sweat, intention, and a deep love for all who inhabit the zone behind the barricade. The military that fought the Kurds is far more advanced than the army that crushed the Commune, and yet the same cobblestone barricades continue to appear in the spring of 2013. In a world where the state wants to be the sole architect and designer of urban space, illegally building anything with one's own hands is an insurrection in itself, waiting to expand block by block until the entire space is quite literally outside of control.

In The Shadow Of The Holy Mountain

Heading west by car from the outskirts of Istanbul, it takes around six hours to reach the Halkidi peninsula in Greece. On the drive out of Istanbul, the surrounding region becomes increasingly impoverished and remains so after crossing the Greek border. Driving along highway route 2, the road roughly follows the coast of the Aegean Sea, sometimes curving inland but eventually returning to the water. Near the town of Asprovalta, a car can exit the highway and proceed down the third finger of the peninsula, passing through the villages of Stavros, Olimpiada, and Stratoni before finally arriving at the village of Ierissos.

The village has been destroyed several times by the Romans, the Venetians, and the Turks. Most recently, it was completely destroyed by an earthquake in 1932. After the disaster, a German urban designer was brought in by the Greek government who created a gridlike layout for the new village. To this day, it is the only village in the surrounding area that is designed in such a manner, standing out against the traditionally chaotic and narrow streets. On the hills above Ierissos, the ruins of the previous village are still visible.

To the south-east of the village is the Holy Mountain, a semi-autonomous region controlled by the Greek Orthodox Church. Women are forbidden to enter this area that encompasses nearly all of the third finger of the peninsula. During the second world war, Hitler allowed the Orthodox monks to maintain their autonomy and after the war, five Serbian generals allied with the Nazis fled into the region and became monks. It is unknown who else is hiding there.

Since 2011, the inhabitants of Ierissos have been trying to stop the establishment of a new gold mine in the mountain above their village. All of the surrounding villages still receive their water directly from the creeks and rivers of the mountains. Miraculously, the water is still clean despite centuries of exploitation by various empires.

Two tunnel mines already exist in the surrounding area, but the new one will be an open pit mine as wide as the boundaries of Ierissos. Hellas Gold operates one of the pre-existing mines above the village of Stratoni. Since it began operations, there has already been one overflow of mine waste that has spilled into the sea along the edge of the village. But this is irrelevant when the oldest form of western wealth is buried underneath the mountains. According to the Deputy Energy and Environment Minister Asimakis Papageorgiou, "We can no longer accept this [area] being left unexploited or barely exploited."

Hellas Gold was recently acquired by Eldorado Gold, a company based in Vancouver, BC. In an effort to pacify the inhabitants of the region, the company has begun dispersing money to the local governments and financing the construction of civic projects. Despite the obvious and visible effects that the gold mine above Stratoni has had upon the coast, the majority of the village supports the company due to the fact that most families have someone who works in the mine. However, the company has been stoking anger in Stratoni against anyone who opposes the mine. The

began to do the same thing, dressing up in their uniforms and handing out boxes of food to anyone who could prove they were a Greek citizen. After seeing this take place, anti-fascists began to oppose these fascist food distributions, only to eventually have the mayor of Athens forbid anyone from giving out food in the park. In the name of combatting fascism, the mayor made a push to take over public space and make the government the only entity allowed to change urban reality.

Since this new decision by the local government, the municipal police have been measuring the precise amount of sidewalk space used by small businesses. When it was time for the taverns and cafes of Exarchia to be measured, the municipal police were accompanied by 100 MAT riot police and backed up by the DIAS motorcycle gang. There was no confrontations with the police during the several hours it took to go to every business. During the brief occupation of the neighborhood, the squatted café VOX pulled its metal shutters down and waited for the police to leave.

It is a new squat, established in the spring of 2012. It is on the upper left point of the triangle that is Exarchia square, taking up the entire edge of one block. Shortly after first opening, it was raided by the police and shut down. The authorities welded metal plates to the doors and then pulled out of the neighborhood. The next day, hundreds of people tore off the metal plates and re-occupied it, later selling the metal as scrap for 300 euros. The money was then given to anarchist prisoners. Since then, the space has served as a café and an outdoor cinema and event space. Along with the Nosotros social center, the VOX is holding down Exarchia square and keeping anarchism alive.

The continued existence of VOX is a victory at a time when one of the oldest and most influential squats has been destroyed. Villa Amalias was a place where thousands of people grew up, listened to punk music, and learned about anti-fascism and anarchism. It was destroyed because it was a threat to the city, a constant reminder that urban reality could be radically changed without the permission of the authorities. Now that it and several other squats have been destroyed, the anarchist core of Athens is now firmly in Exarchia, near the university and the bookstores, where it has always been. It is still the zone to defend. The expansion out of the neighborhood has been set back considerably and the fight against the fascists has taken up much of everyone's energy.

Athens

It has become normal for Athenians to learn of fascist attacks against immigrants. For two years, the Golden Dawn has been terrorizing the immigrant population. Democracy brought them into the parliament, just as it has kept them there. At a time when the population should be united against capitalism, they are instead fighting each other, blaming the immigrants for taking resources and jobs, blaming the left for giving too much away, blaming right for not giving enough. Some who voted for communists or socialists all their lives suddenly voted for Golden Dawn. Tired of the standard choice of either the socialist PASOK or the conservative New Democracy, many voters chose to give the fascists a chance to do what the other parties could not. This is the trap of Athenian democracy. Rather than take control of their own lives, these voters give their power away to anyone that promises to unite them, to lead them, to do what they cannot, whether they be Golden Dawn or SYRIZA.

In the ancient state of Athens, the slaves that created the wealth of the city were ignored while various political factions vied for power in the temples of governance. Very little has changed. The political factions are still squabbling as a foreign economic system is tearing apart the land. The fascists are helping the high capitalists channel the wrath of the Greek population towards immigrants, leftists, and anarchists rather than against the proper target. But on the other side, SYRIZA is playing the parliamentary game and remaining confined to speeches on television, denunciations of the right, and symbolic protests.

Below the parliament, in Syntagma Square, a different battle has been playing itself out. Many important events have unfolded in this park over the last years. There has been the square movement and the resulting crackdown by the police. But there has also been a suicide in the park. An old man named Dimitris Christoulas shot himself after yelling he didn't want to "leave debt to his children." After his death, a police officer was severely beaten by a crowd before his clothes were stripped off him and then burned. Now, there is battle over who control this public space: the population or the government.

It started during the square movement, when resources were being given away for free to anyone who needed them. This continued after the square movement was crushed, with mutual aid groups providing food in the middle of the park. But the fascists soon caught on to this tactic and

village has Hellas Gold-sponsored loudspeakers that warn the inhabitants of any protest that may occur nearby. The support for the gold mine in the village has reached such insane dimensions that some inhabitants have taken to spray-painting "WORK BEFORE HEALTH" on the walls of the nearby buildings. This village is the opposite of the rebel village of Ierissos.

When the Ierissos villagers first learned that Eldorado wished to dig a new open pit mine, a group constructed a small house in the forest where the mine was proposed. A few people kept the house constantly inhabited through the seasons, burning wood in the stove during the winter and leaving the windows open in the summer. But when the company made its move, the workers from the nearby villages personally destroyed the house before the company and the police sealed off the area. This was the beginning of the current struggle.

All local resistance to the project is centered in Ierissos, with many demonstrations starting at "the stoplight" of the village. After getting coffee and pastries at the nearby cafes, the people converge at this main intersection before getting into caravans that travel up into the mountains. Since the destruction of the forest house, there have been dozens of demonstrations in the woods, most of them involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. Most of these demonstrations also turn into fights with the police who at this point work for Eldorado, obeying their commands and following their orders. After these fights, dozens of people return to Ierissos with bruises, broken bones, swollen eyes, lacerations, and burns. But in this rebel village they are safe and can recover.

Ierissos is almost completely against the mine and there are only a few people who support it. The authorities have referred to it as a "center of chaos." However, the village closest to the proposed open pit mine, Megali Panagia, is not entirely against it. Like Straton, the village is divided based on how many people work for Eldorado and how many do not. The story is the same for every nearby village and tension has vastly grown between the two sides.

On February 17th, 2013, a group of around 50 people entered the future site of the open pit mine. Wearing balaclavas and equipped with shotguns and molotovs, members of the attack group held two security guards hostage while others destroyed all the mining equipment. Immediately after this attack, the stock price for Eldorado fell by 6 percent. But before any of

the mine's opponents had the time to rejoice, the police raided houses in Megali Panagia and Ierissos. When the police entered the rebel village, the church bells began to ring, signaling for everyone to respond. Unfortunately they were not in time to stop the anti-terrorist police from kidnapping several well-liked villagers in front of their families at gun point.

After they were taken, the villagers began converging on the police and a fight started. Soon the ground was littered with stones and the air filled with tear gas. Once the police were pushed away, the villagers sealed off the two entrances to the town with barricades and then proceeded to burn down the police station and two police vans in the parking lot. The owner of the building that housed the police station was not jubilant upon seeing the fire, but he was not especially angry either. Currently, there is a black flag hanging over the remains of the station. Since this incident, the police do not enter the village except in large numbers.

Life in the autonomous village continues as it always has. Along the shore, boat builders continue to cut their own lumber underneath corrugated tin roofs. Black flags adorn one of these workshops, blown by the breezes from the sea. The fishing boats they build in these places are similar to the ones they have built for hundreds of years. In the morning, the fishermen leave the harbor of the village, throw their nets, pull them back in, and return with their catch. Between the mountains and the sea, the people of Ierissos could sustain themselves even if everything collapsed around them.

The rebellion against the company and the police has brought all the generations together. Old women have had their ankles broken, old men have made their first molotov cocktails, and children have taken care of their wounded parents and grandparents. Both people from the left and right are together in this village rebellion, ignoring the dictates the political spectrum would otherwise impose upon them. Together, the villagers have torn down stairs to the beach built with company money and created new ones with their own hands. Together, they have refurbished a school and kept it out of the hands of Eldorado, refusing to allow the company to purchase the loyalty of their children. And recently, together, they have organized a concert that brought 5,000 people to the beach and houses of the village.

At the barricades of the village, everyone takes turns keeping it occupied. In the event that the police decide to approach, the church bells will begin ringing without pause. In the winter, when the air was still cold, people at the barricades huddled around fires as night fell, and during these mo-

Protestant philosophers, the peasants quickly found these reformers to be as tyrannical and corrupt as the Catholic overlords. Once the rebels were destroyed, the new Protestant authorities who had survived the uprising began to cement their philosophies in the minds of the defeated.

Less than a century later, hundreds of thousands of peasants were exterminated in the Thirty Years War, fighting endless battles so that a few kings and princes could maintain their power. Witches, heretics, peasants, and free people were all murdered during these hundred years, leaving a barren and enclosed land, ruled by a religion that taught them to value sacrifice in the name of abstractions and work for the sake of a landlord. Once the kings had bled the land and solidified their borders with each other, the newly urbanized and enclosed population knew nothing else but the new order: rational, godly, and pure. The new religion spread westward, reaching as far as the eastern coast of what became the United States, bringing about the current capitalist world system.

Now, the German state is the center of the EU. Its leaders tell the Spanish, the Greek, the Irish, the Portuguese, and the Italians that they are lazy, that they do not sacrifice enough for the economy, that they are too wasteful, that they are not frugal enough, that everything is their fault: they are sinners, and only work can set them free. This triggered shame in many people in Greece, making them internalize this work ethic and judge themselves according to it. If their city did not look like clean and productive Berlin, they were doing something wrong. If there was still poverty, graffiti, protests, riots, and strikes, it was the fault of the others, the ones who didn't want to change, the ones who were lazy, not them.

However, many Greek people became enraged at Germany and the EU. It is common to hear on the streets of Athens that what Germany did not accomplish during the second world war, it is accomplishing now. Unfortunately, this anger is often specific to the German government and the underlying values of capitalism and work are not questioned. Instead, people attempt to affirm a Greek identity with national flags, images of the Parthenon, and the myth of democracy. Some Greeks defend their national identity against the invader, and through a nightmarish alchemy, this becomes the fascism we see in Greece today, the Golden Dawn, the life blood of the kings, the defenders of capitalism and work.

As with Aristotle's memory, Greek politicians use the legacy of democracy to defend the Greek state against the ravages of austerity. It is said that because democracy was born in Athens, Greece must be remembered and spared. Since the start of the crisis, the myth of democracy has become intertwined with the Greek identity, a point of pride, something to cling to in the storm. But like the Acropolis of Athens, the history of democracy is a symbol used to obscure a history of slavery, warfare, and imperialism. What is happening today in the metropolis of Athens is a continuation of what has always been happening there. The kings and their armies conquer the land, making their decisions in the palace and parliament, while the slaves toil away, creating the wealth that will only pay for stronger chains.

The heart of the world empire has always moved. Once it was Athens, then Rome, then Constantinople. But there have been splits within the empire, moments when different factions begin to war with each other. When the Protestant Reformation took place, a sect of religious authorities decided that the authority of Rome was too corrupt and irrational. The people from the south had grown accustomed to tyrannical rulers and labored as little as possible, only working when they were forced to. Such a situation repelled the Protestants, who wanted to implement a rational authority that would encourage everyone to be holy, pure, and industrious, to work for the greater glory of an abstraction called God. By doing this, they would also be supporting the priests and the kings.

The Protestant work ethic is simple. Work is the point of life, and the more one denies themselves in the pursuit of work, the better that person is. Purity is central to this ethic. Goodness is measured in how much is accumulated and saved, not in how life away from work is enjoyed. One is more or less pure based on how productive one is. The ability to enjoy one's labor is not important to this ethic; only the finished product and the continuity of work are valuable. The ethic finds its strongest support and clearest articulation in Germany, the UK, and the US. All those who have climbed to the top of the capitalist hierarchy have done so through economy, industry, and frugality. Those who do not succeed in this ascension are fated to be impure sloths, judged for their laziness and condemned to poverty.

All of this is built upon hundreds of thousands of people murdered during the German peasant wars, the first rebellion against the old authority. Luther and the other propagators of the work ethic demonized these peasants and did nothing to stop their slaughter, instead choosing to decry their rebellion and call for its end. Once inspired by the words of these

ments, Ierissos was no different than the autonomous village of Cheran in Guerrero, or the recently occupied Gezi Park. In the light of the flames, the eternal power of the barricade manifests itself, connecting these rebels with the insurgents of the Paris Commune and the Planton de Oaxaca. Tying them together is nothing more than the commitment to defend a place and to not back down until either defeat or victory.

Therma

Thessaloniki is two hours away from the rebel village. A drive over the mountains and across the plains delivers the traveler to the edge of the metropolis. Near the outskirts, close to the airport, is the Viome, a factory that has been occupied by its workers. Many of the products that it currently manufactures (organic laundry detergent, glue, cleaning supplies, etc.) can be found in most of the squats and social centers in Thessaloniki and Athens.

On her way back from Ierissos, Naomi Klein recently gave a talk at the occupied factory, explaining that the European crisis has been manufactured in order to extract natural resources from the economically weak nation states like Greece, Cyprus, Spain, and Ireland. Her new film and book will explain the situations in autonomous places like the Viome factory and Ierissos and call for a replication of the type of tactics demonstrated there as a concrete way to fight global capitalism.

Posters for her talk at the factory lined the walls of the metropolis in the days preceding it. There is a lot of graffiti and many posters all over the busy city. Some of the posters will lead the curious to events at the Micropolis, a four story social center in the middle of the commercial district. Created by the anti-authoritarian movement, this rented space contains a bar, a kitchen, a print lab, a gym, a day care, a general store, and a space for events and music. From the balcony extends a red and black flag, hanging over the busy shopping district below with its american pop music, perfume, mannequins, and expensive shoes. Micropolis is the biggest social center in Thessaloniki and buzzes with people every day, utilizing all that is offered and maintained by this rented space, standing in contrast to the surrounding area where luxuries are bought and sold while people beg in the streets.

The original name for the city was Therma, the Greek word for malaria, once a common illness in the mosquito-filled marshlands along the sea. Near the rivers that flow down the mountains and through the metropolis, mosquitoes still swarm thickly in the night air. One of these rivers flows by a squatted textile factory named Yfanet, the largest squatted area in the city. Since 2004, the expansive buildings of the old factory have transformed into housing, a show space, a vast BMX park, a library, a bar, and a kitchen. There are over a dozen large fig trees, one of which wraps its branches around an old rusting bus in one of the courtyards. Young people in the neighborhood use the BMX park for entire afternoons and evenings, people come to the weekly bar nights and kitchens, and hundreds pack into the show space. It is one of the explicitly queer spaces in this ancient and traditionally religious city.

On nearly every street is an Orthodox shrine or church. Passersby light candles, make the cross on their chests, or mutter something to pictures of Jesus. Recently, an Orthodox priest called Gay Pride an “unholy and unnatural event” and claimed to have received 19,000 signatures from Thessaloniki residents asking for the event to be canceled. A week after Pride, the police began to arrest transgender women off the street, bring them into the station, and tell them that if they did not “return to normal” they would be arrested for prostitution. Nearly simultaneously, two immigrants were stabbed by fascists, uncommon for a city that has thus far escaped the rise of Golden Dawn. These events reveal that all these actors stand steadfastly in the fascist camp: the church, the fascist hooligans, and the police.

In March of 2013, there were 20,000 people on the streets of the metropolis demonstrating against the Eldorado mine. The authorities tried to spread a rumor that most of these people were actually tourists following a very small march. In the mainstream media, this event was consistently downplayed and dismissed in similar ways. One man who has a large stake in Hellas Gold and the Eldorado project is a media tycoon who owns one of the major television stations. He is one of many capitalists who are exploiting the crisis to their own advantage. With the recent closure of the public ERT television in Athens, the government is making it clear that no one will be allowed to broadcast information that diverges too strongly from the official story.

With the police and the government enforcing the austerity measures on the inhabitants of Thessaloniki, those who are fighting back and becoming autonomous are a true threat. If the rebels can prove to the population that

Greek people are not lazy, that work is not more important than health, and that there is a world outside of capitalism, the plans of the economists will begin to crumble. Every day in Thessaloniki, old men and women sell Serbian black market cigarettes in the parks, immigrants wander the streets waiting for their good luck, the bakeries open, store shutters go up, and the buses fill with workers. The alternatives to this daily routine are small and appear irregularly, sometimes expanding, often times encountering extreme resistance and becoming isolated. But glimpses of it appear as constellations on the landscape, pointing the way out of the trap.

Work

Gold. This is what Plato believed ran through the blood of the kings. And now, thousands of years after his death, his student Aristotle’s birthplace is being assaulted in order to supply more life blood to the kings. As young Aristotle left his home in Halkidiki to travel to Athens, he had no idea of what drastic consequences would follow from his education. Together with Plato and his contemporaries, these philosophers taught kings the laws of the universe and advised them during their conquests. Gold is still the life blood of the kings, but now it does not just sit in their vaults. It resides in computers and cell phones, it appears as a fluctuating series of number at stock exchanges, and it orbits the planet in hundreds of satellites. Gold has been the common currency of kings throughout time, but now it has spread itself out through the fabric of capitalist reality.

In Halkidiki, people invoke Aristotle as a reason to not build the gold mine, as if his memory itself would make the company go back on its decision to dig the open pit mine. But this little boy from an ancient village definitively left the land of his birth when he entered the city of Athena. After having extended their empire too far, the Athenians were challenged by the Spartans and lost their war against them. When Aristotle arrived, the metropolis was in a period of defeat and weakness, watching as the Macedonians invaded more of the nearby land. The armies of King Phillip II of Macedon destroyed the village of Aristotle’s birth and enslaved its population. But eventually, because Aristotle had taught his young son Alexander, the king rebuilt the village and returned the slaves to liberty as a favor to the philosopher. Perhaps now, the memory of Aristotle will spare Halkidiki from war and pillaging, but if history repeats itself, it will only be after the worst has already been done.