

## **The nature of the global attack and the importance of emerging networks of struggle**

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The crisis that broke out in mid-2007 has entered its fifth year. It is being usually described as follows:

From the mid-1970s, the cost of the Capitalist Dream was rising while real wages were not, so households were borrowing more and more (mortgages, credit cards, student and car loans). That unsustainable credit bubble blew in 2007.

After the crisis hit, governments tried to rescue the financial industry: by mid-2009 huge amounts of money were handed to banks, insurance companies, large bankrupt corporations. This happened at the cost of real wages, job benefits, household debts, public services etc.

The governments, by rescuing the private financial industries, took over their debts. In order to do this, governments had to borrow money, enlarging national debts. Increasingly, indebted states tried to collect money from the people, driving to desperation working and middle classes throughout Europe and the US. As people have less and less money, consumption is falling rapidly. As demand for goods and services is shrinking fast, businesses and the rich no more invest in production and prefer to reduce costs by massive layoffs, only aggravating the crisis.

Nowadays some people are speaking against the bad financialization that ruined the real economy, calling for a more responsible capitalism and for the regulation of the financial markets.

Others describe what is happening as a *systemic* crisis of capitalism, speaking about a huge accumulation crisis of the '70s as a result of capitalism reaching the limits of its development and exhausting its dynamic. The collapse was postponed through credit, but now the situation has escalated into a general crisis that undermines the very existence of capitalism and of the world as we know it.

We feel that speaking against the “bad financialization” or calling for a return to Keynesianism is foolish and pointless. On the other hand, as we consider capitalism a death machine that feeds on destruction, we would greatly hesitate to announce its end.

We would like to make some remarks:

**1. The crisis of the '70s cannot be understood if it is not related to the social movements** in the West and the anti-colonial movements in the periphery. In many respects, the crisis was *a result of* and *a response to* these movements.

Especially as far as the so-called "first world" is concerned:

"The outbreak of the crisis in 1973 was determined by the movements of refusal of work that had re-emerged in the late sixties. At that time there was little doubt that 'capitalism worked,' that there were jobs, that there was income to buy the ever-increasing offer of new consumer goods. There was doubt, however, whether it was worth working for them so much and under the given conditions. The goods looked okay, but the work looked unbearable...The double protests against 'consumer society' and 'working for it' defined the new crisis. Somewhere between the hippies and the striking mass workers capital found no place for itself. Under these conditions capital would usually have smashed the whole shop, destroying capital and canceling the New Deal of the '30s and WWII. But such a radical new start was not possible — it was too risky under the existing relations of power — so **capital wasn't able to be destructive enough, which meant that the crisis became chronic, dragging on until now**"

(“From Midnight to Dawn”, *Midnight Notes at Thirty Years*, Autonomedia, 2010).

## **2. The attack on the so-called first world was made possible by the looting of the Global South, a procedure that went on unnoticed through the last three decades:**

Just as today many are announcing "the end of capitalism", in the mid-nineties an equally large crowd was proclaiming "the end of work" as a result of information technology making tens of millions of jobs in the developed countries not necessary anymore. "...Technological innovations and market-directed forces...are moving us to the edge of a near workerless world" (Rifkin). But instead of the creation of a new workerless consumer society, a new global slavery system was being organized:

"...the computerization and robotization of factories and offices in Western Europe, North America and Japan has been accompanied by a process of "globalization" and "new enclosures." Capitalists have been fighting as fiercely to have the right to put assembly zones and brothels in the least mechanized parts of the world as to have the right to patent life forms. Instead of a decline, there has been a great expansion of factory production throughout many regions of the planet. Indeed, much of the profit of global corporations and much of the interest received by international banks has been created out of this low-tech, factory and sexual work. In order to get workers for these factories and brothels, a vast new enclosure has been taking place throughout Africa, Asia and the Americas. The very capital that owns "the ethereal information machines which supplant industrial production" (Negri) is also involved in the enclosure of lands throughout the planet, provoking famine, disease, low-intensity war and collective misery in the process"

(“The End of Work or the Renaissance of Slavery?” George Caffentzis, 1998).

## **3. Consumerism was more a means of governance than an economic system. Crisis can also be a means of governance as capital can now be destructive enough!** Consumerism and welfare states were too expensive to maintain. When the global attack of capital created new relations of power, a radical new start for capitalism was made possible. Against this global attack only global struggles can pose a threat.

"It is very difficult to have any power as a worker when you have this whirlwind of expropriation, of breaking down the means of existence. It is very clear what the goal

is. The goal basically is to take back the clock to a situation in which capital was at the turn of the 20th century, when they produced workers, used them and thrown them when they didn't need them... Every struggle that is made has to have an international perspective because there is a very direct connection between processes that are happening very far from us and what is happening in our own country, for example the fact that industry could be relocated in the Philippines or in Mexico was premised on the fact that Filipino or Mexican people were expropriated by their lands, were impoverished by the IMF. The capitalists' ability to dismantle the struggle in the factory system in Europe was directly premised and made possible by the attack that was waged against the Mexican or Filipino workers and peasants... The tsunami that finally has ended here begun with the long waves of land expropriation and destruction of local economy in Africa, Latin America and Asia, the massive expropriation of people from the most basic means of their existence..."

(Silvia Federici, public discussion "What is this crisis after all?" Thessaloniki, July 2010 published in Greek in the collective work *Notes from the steppe*, Editions des Étrangers, 2011).

#### **4. Struggles cannot be born out of misery or frustration alone. Anger and disappointment are rising, but capitalism is also a machine for the mass production of despair and confusion.**

"...Greece has become an experimental laboratory for policies to be applied to the rest of Europe ... the State first used the attack against immigrants as a counter-insurgency technique after the December 2008 riots, and then allowed the escalation of a humanitarian crisis in certain neighborhoods of Athens, thus giving birth to fascist populism and nazi militias ... Fascism is not rising *because* of capitalist globalization but *in support* of capitalist globalization. In the same way, fascism is not rising *because of the existence* of immigrants but *thanks to the attacks* on immigrants. Fascists are being handed their power by the State. The rise of fascism was made possible only because the Western tolerance limit to severe injustice was horrendously stretched: It was only because of the total denial of immigrants' rights that the attack on Western citizens' rights could be made acceptable. Impoverished Athens' neighborhoods have been used as a social laboratory for the creation of fascist reflexes and groups. But this can get even worse. During the nazi pogroms in May 2011, Athens experienced the dystopia of a society ruled by mad violence (something like the ongoing "drug war" in Mexico which, according to subcomandante Marcos, aims at getting people "to accept everyday horror as something that cannot be changed")."

("In the struggle between yourself and the world, back the world", Clandestina, text presented at the Bulgaria No Border Camp, August 2011).

#### **5. A way out: struggles, reasoning, networking, creating hope!**

We must be careful not to be trapped, not to accept to be intimidated.

*Against scapegoating, solidarity to immigrants and minority groups:* Division has always been a standard tactic for distraction and disempowerment. In a period of crisis it can only get worse, as intolerance and violence spread within the population, and not against the system, can destroy any ability for resistance. Capitalists in the past have shown that they will encourage the escalation of hate into actual war: That is Capital's method to destroy peoples

power and social networks for a new round of accumulation - the recent experience of wars in former Yugoslavia offer a bitter confirmation.

*Against resignation, hope:* We need to create networks of solidarity, encourage discussion and analysis, draw a line of defense and mobilize people in defense of the *commons*<sup>1</sup> (in Greece, for example we can name the struggle of the 300 immigrant hunger strikers, the struggle against the garbage dump in Keratea, the university occupations by students, the fight against the privatization of the water company in Thessaloniki, the resistance against the gold-mine in Halkidiki).

Against confusion and populism we must stand firm on our values and analysis and not make compromises in order to gain support (allowing, for example, the reappearance of elements that in the past were used to divide and control people, i.e. speaking about “national sovereignty” and “patriotism” against globalization “because these are concepts that the people can easier refer to and identify with”). There is no good populism as opposed to a bad one: Populism is always reactionary. In a crisis, people need to see strong positions and practical proposals: If we don’t provide strong positions, either fascist populists will fill in the empty space, or a weak leftist rhetoric will prevail, and this, together with the lack of practical ideas, will send everybody home in resignation.

Remember: In unity and mutual respect we are strong. Many of the decisions of global capitalists were made under the pressure and threat of the social movement. As we are speaking here today, in Tunisia "a transnational meeting of activists [for the sharing of] struggles and [the construction of] common strategies and campaigns" is taking place (Tunis, September 29 - October 2, 2011) <http://international.r02.org/>. Immigrant workers from North Africa were certainly influenced by the European tradition of emancipatory social and political struggles and thought, while precarious workers in Europe can only gain from the fervor of the Arab Spring. The coming together of the anticolonial spirit of the ‘60s and the defiance of a predefined future as expressed through the clandestine immigrant mobility, the ability to gain global vision and understanding and raise empathy through the inflowing of different life stories and capitalist crime story-tellers, the possibility of creating a real collective and global consciousness, all these indicate that this meeting of struggles can become an explosive mixture. And this mixture can start from existing struggles:

Throughout Europe, capitalists are attacking the education sector but we have student struggles in many countries - we must also mention *Edu-factory*, a transnational collective engaged in the transformations of the global university and conflicts in knowledge production. <http://www.edu-factory.org>

Throughout Europe attacks against immigrants are on the rise, but so is immigrant resistance - see the recent revolts in Italy, the 300 immigrants’ hunger strike in Greece or the public building occupations by Maghreb immigrants in France. We should also mention the *No Border* and *Welcome to Europe* networks.

In the global South, *la Via Campesina* is an international movement which brings together

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<sup>1</sup> Commons are not just the public goods (public space, public education, health and the infrastructure that allows our society to function -- electricity or water delivery systems), to them one should also add the environment and the cultural sphere and as capitalist assault advances, we have to include even things that we wouldn’t think of in the past, as the human genome or biodiversity. Understanding the commons as *shared gifts* we can move on to include land and resources etc.

millions of peasants, small and medium-size farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural workers from around the world. It defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. It strongly opposes corporate-driven agriculture and transnational companies that are destroying people and nature.

From North Africa to Latin America and China, we are living in a period with the broadest and most intense struggles by the largest ever number of people. Yugoslavia was one of the first targets of globalized capital on European soil, foretelling today's attack. Meetings like the one we are having today only show that the attackers are not invincible.

*Clandestina, September 2011*