

THE QUESTION Should we use the term ‘fascism’ to describe the current hard-right turn in global politics? Like many others, we asked ourselves this question before forming our group. As theorists, artists, filmmakers and writers, we were aware that capital’s (alleged) commitment to democracy was weakening. Liberal democracy was fraught with problems, but evidently a new authoritarian mentality was taking hold, in part a reaction to protest movements generated by the global financial crisis of 2008. Yet while this resurgence of viciously racist, misogynist, anti-migrant, and anti-communist politics has been transnational, its articulations of ideological and cultural elements must be interpreted – and fought – in the context of history, class struggle and emancipatory politics in each national formation. National space is the circumstance not of our own choosing. While thinking about the ‘right term’, certain things happened in Greece.

**ANTI-FASCIST
CULTURE**
The First Year
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THE STATE (OF AFFAIRS) Greece, a border EU country facing East and thus receiving annually thousands of the persecuted and dispossessed, has become a laboratory for the normalisation of a diffused *fascist effect* since the right won the national election in July 2019. We formed as a group just months before, in February 2019, having anticipated the electoral defeat of the Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) government, following its earlier defeat at the negotiation table in a divided EU where the taxpayers of one country were set against those of another. We can’t forget this ‘divide and conquer’ success of capital (assisted, of course, by the economic violence of capital controls imposed in the country) which turned the Greek left into the ‘left parenthesis’ of 2015 to 2019. Nor can we forget that the shameful EU-Turkey pact of 2016, entrenching the detention of refugees and migrants in concentration camps called ‘hotspots,’ was signed by Syriza. But we won’t forget, either, that this defeated left did expand *by law* the civil rights of ‘sexual’ minorities (the ‘creditors’ did not object to that). A year after

we formed, we share the country’s predicament in joining Trumpism with a European face. Eight months into the right-wing government, we have witnessed: the end of Greece’s important university asylum law and the branding of public university as the cradle of criminal ‘ultra-leftism’; the violent evacuation of squats that hosted refugees and anarchists; the glorification and free reign of the police; an alarming increase in anti-migrant hate-mongering in the media and formal state discourse; historical revisionism so as to discredit past anti-fascist struggles alongside plans for spectacular, costly fiestas of national/ist pride (‘Greece 2021’); the push of misogynistic and anti-queer religion in schools and society at large; the affirmation of mafia capital; and, as we write these lines, in February-March 2020, the Greek-Turkish border is becoming a militarised crisis zone since Turkey

opened its borders to put pressure on Europe. On March 2, Greece announced its suspension of examining asylum applications (contra international law) for a month. The fascist effect is being suffered by thousands of the dispossessed trying to cross to Europe right now, being pushed back by the Greek armed forces. All this, and a lot more, amply confirms the aims and orientations of the party in power.

So for our group in Greece the interminable debate about the ‘right term’ is over: the ‘new normality’ promised by the government of New Democracy (the old establishment right-wing party, largely responsible for the country’s indenture) is installing a Police-Religion-Business state that intends to end the left *even as a narrative of opposition*. This is why structures of solidarity are a primary target. This is a counter-revolutionary state that constantly identifies internal and external ‘enemies’. Greatly assisted by a press and TV owned by media moguls, this state is planning a sea wall off the eastern islands against floating ‘refuse’ (read: human refuse) while also undermining women’s and

LGBTQ rights. This is a government that has eliminated the gap between the far and centre right, ruling us as a Total Right. The Golden Dawn trial, ongoing since 2015 and not unrelated to the electoral defeat of this neo-Nazi party, is extremely important. Yet, as everyone here knows, Golden Dawn's insidious political objectives and worldview have been comfortably accommodated within this Total Right.

As for the Greek left, we see it in the writing on the walls; in the initiatives of solidarity schools and social centres; in the anti-capitalist feminists' collectives; in the social media and in 'islands' of the press; in the universities. We also see it as a divided presence in the parliament, unable to stop the barrage of anti-labour policies, and as a divided extra-parliamentary counter-power: dozens of political organisations are present in the frequent protest rallies whose crowds are nowhere near the size of those that filled 'the squares' just a few years back. The grassroots clusters today, vocal as they are, do not amount to a 'dual power' situation by any stretch of the imagination. Greece's Total Right and its fascist effect enjoy popular support - of the same kind enjoyed by the Tories in the UK and Trump in the USA. And this despite the fact that Greece is no imperialist hegemon. Still, it grabs some of the fruits of social imperialism available to the Global North, and it will do anything to hold this place. Greece now aligns itself with imperialist capital's general tendency to securitise all crises.

What was to be done? Greece has a rich anti-fascist history. And many anti-fascist groups doing good work were around long before our group formed. Why then did we form it? Because of the near total hegemony of the right (often camouflaged as the 'centre') in the cultural field. This meant restricted space for voices of protest, with little room to think *deeply* and *collectively* about the dismal developments under way. The understanding that fascism emerges to protect the status quo is not widely shared by cultural workers, because the dominant narrative sees fascism as the 'totalitarian' antithesis of 'democratic' capitalism. This

blind-spot pervades the cultural field, which bears the stamp of the class that owns it.

In the field of literature, very few have spoken publicly against the threat of neo-fascism. In the visual arts and in critical theory, things have been better, awareness more visible. But the public sphere overall is dominated by intellectuals of the right, while the art field is devastated by precarity and the 'save yourself' mentality that undermines collective opposition. Even if not overwhelmed by conservative liberalism, the country's art scene writhes in its split between commitment to the bourgeoisie and



International Women's Day demo, Athens, March 8, 2019

nostalgia for an avant-garde that was only rarely articulated as a force to be reckoned with in Greece. All this has been exacerbated by the absence of state support for art workers (which predated the crisis of 2010).

In our inaugural text, of March 2019, we tried to connect the dots between broader political developments and the state of the cultural field, refusing to see the situation in terms of 'business as usual'. We took the name Antifascist Culture to mark our stance and opted for member anonymity to ensure that whatever we did would not become 'cultural capital'. We wanted to register collective resistance in the cultural field in advance of the fascist effect. Anti-fascism would be low-fi political education: a means to stand against dominant ideology in the circumstances faced in Greece. We are keen to acknowledge that our inspiration came

from friends, colleagues and comrades abroad - and above all from Poland, where the Antifascist Year was just starting in February 2019. Most in our group live and work in Athens and some other city (Moscow, Edinburgh, Geneva, Amsterdam) or do residencies abroad; or travel for fieldwork and work. Our networks are extremely important for getting the bigger picture, for reading developments in Greece in relation what is going on elsewhere. We work against the dominant narrative that always sees Greece as an exception and as 'particular'. We know that all governments disseminate such narratives, and we know they are aimed against solidarity. For many decades now, internationalism has been stolen by capital from the workers and the 'wretched of the earth'. This has been a precondition for neo-fascism as an emergent transnational politics.

We knew from the outset that collective interventions are not easy - especially when one's life is dominated by waged labour (or securing income) and social reproduction work across borders. Yet we had no option but to try, knowing well that voluntary work means that something else is left undone. In the past year, we wrote and published theoretical texts about the situation in Greece, held an open assembly, filmed and screened an antifascist manifesto, gave lectures, started monthly workshops, translated and signed protest letters by comrades in other countries, and joined many demonstrations (the first of which was, symbolically, on International Women's Day, March 8, 2019). Some members left, others joined. Throughout the year, we have, above all, shared daily our fears and dismay over the deepening divides. This communication has, at times, been important for our sanity. We have not yet overcome the shock that we must now, in the 21st century, engage in antifascist struggle. Yet it becomes ever clearer that the conditions that necessitate it are here to stay.

THE FUTURE We are aware that the Greek Total Right in power comes with a total package of policies fully consistent with the country's place in the extraction and production chains of contemporary imperial-



Demo protesting the Turkish-Greek border conflict and in support of refugees and migrants, Athens, March 5, 2020. Called by the extra-parliamentary left and drawing thousands of protesters

-ism, even as a 'semi-periphery' of the Global North. Greece's 'exposure' to 'migraton flows' (state language) will only increase in a future of climate destruction; climate fascism may not be a distant future - this is widely discussed in activist and academic circles but rarely appears in public discourse. Overall, very few of the conditions that will define the 21st century enter public discourse in the country. What dominates public discourse are shrill calls for harder borders and the privatisation of everything. The future will be a situation of potential or actual explosiveness determined by global geopolitics. Will the rival imperialist powers go to war over control of resources and migration? Will the European Union unravel? Will Latin America be captured by new dictatorships? Will cyber-monarchists manage to realise their vision of accelerated techno-supremacy? There is no end to questions of this kind.

The lessons of the 20th century are in short supply. The politics of memory must be practiced from one day to the next. On the best of days, hopeful comrades ponder the possibilities of 'disaster communism'. But then we're all dragged back to everyday life: we switch on our computers (products of imperialist extraction) and carry on - unless, that is, we find ourselves drowning in our sea crossing to Lesbos island or shot by a local employer for daring to ask, as migrants, to be paid for labour done (this does happen in Greece). We're well aware that the

capitalist class, in defending its interests in multiple converging crises, will not hesitate to choose outright fascism over liberal democracy. Capital's adaptation plan, the one point of agreement among all its fractions, is to securitise and militarise just about everything. The endpoint of such adaptation, fascism grows by step and turn, as an organised power of elimination (for the 'unfortunate') and control (for the 'fortunate'). We refuse to capitulate to this dystopia - this is the stance we take as a group. We are grateful to the comrades who come to our aid against the ethics and politics of fear. As for poetry, it seems to exist after Auschwitz, but what is its universal cause?

