

COLLECTIVE STATEMENT OF TOTAL OBJECTION OF ARMY



“We were trained in the army for ten weeks and in this time more profoundly influenced than by ten years at school. We learned that a bright button is weightier than four volumes of Schopenhauer. At first astonished, then embittered, and finally indifferent, we recognised that what matters is not the mind but the boot brush, not intelligence but the system, not freedom but drill.

We became soldiers with eagerness and enthusiasm, but they have done everything to knock that out of us. After three weeks it was no longer incomprehensible to us that a braided postman should have more authority over us than had formerly our parents, our teachers, and the whole gamut of culture from Plato to Goethe. With our young, awakened eyes we saw that the classical conception of the Fatherland held by our teachers resolved itself here into a renunciation of personality such as one would not ask of the meanest servants--salutes, springing to attention, parade-marches, presenting arms, right wheel, left wheel, clicking the heels, insults, and a thousand pettifogging details. We had fancied our task would be different, only to find we were to be trained for heroism as though we were circus-ponies.”

Erich Maria Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front

As it normally happens in the last 100 years in the place we happened to be born, now the bell has tolled for us. Once we became adults, the “proud” moment came to serve the greek state. To fulfill our duty to our homeland, which as they told us, we must love without questioning why. They told us that we would become men, without asking us though if we really want to reproduce gender-based and sexist divisions. They told us that in the case of war, the burden of defending the nation would fall on us, taking it for granted that the nation is something sacred to us. They told us that they would prepare us to fight in the battlefield, without asking us if we desire to fight for the interests of our oppressors. They told us that we would become heroes! Things were simple.

**We would have to learn to execute orders.
We would have to learn to be disciplined.
We would have to learn to dress uniformly.
We would have to learn not to judge.
We would have to join the greek army!!**



<http://goo.gl/TaiTdG>

The crème de la crème of the greek army teaches us its panhuman values.

The same state that educated us inside prison-schools, that talked our ear off for the existence of a greater deity and enforced us to strict social and organisational models, now attempts to teach us to obey someone that will show us how to fight a war; an enlightened leader that holds the truth, the right and wrong, while we should stay silent. We should nurture snitching instead of solidarity; hierarchy, submission, sexism and nationalism instead of equality and freedom.

The state mechanisms do whatever they can in order to produce people which, after the completion of their education, are called citizens and ought to have some specific characteristics. Characteristics that are enforced in a “natural” way through the institutions that the individual comes into contact with from a very early age, so that (s)he ends up being “useful” to society. Useful actually to the very small percentage of the global population that possesses the majority of the wealth and retaining it by trampling over the subaltern of society. The army, forming a perfect miniature model of society, is one more institution that strengthens the cultivation and reproduction of these characteristics.

Self-organization

What they did not take into account, though, is that we do not consider it as a given to enlist. **We stand up against the most murderous institutions of states and not just the greek army, which we are called to serve.** We decide to refuse to offer any of our services to an institution that constitutes the most characteristic expression of militarism.

For some years now, we are participating in self-organized groups. Groups that critically analyse the current social condition, pit against its authoritarian strands and attempt to form something new in its place. Together with our comrades, we attempt on a daily basis to create a new reality, free from any form of power relations and exploitation, having solidarity and collective thought and action as its foundational characteristics.

Thus, accepting to serve a military institution would be like negating our values and eventually ourselves. **We do not think that self-organisation can fit in the army which is by its very nature a hierarchical and authoritarian formation. Neither militarism nor militaristic organization has a place in our collective ways of organising, which in turn do not recognise leaders, heroes or any form of authority that is supposed to guide people to the right direction. Our ways, in contrast, recognise nothing other than collective decisions and actions through horizontal self-organized processes.**

The choice of total objection of army

We choose the public statement of total objection of army, considering that in this way we participate in a struggle that has been going on for three decades and aims at the direct opposition to the institution of army. Additionally, we choose to state our objection in a collective way, in order to show our stance of responding collectively to the individual-based calls from the army. The ruling power tends to prosecute us singly, operating in a direction of individualising each and every case. We stand on the opposite side of this, putting forward collective forms of struggle, resistance and objection.

Furthermore, considering antimilitarism as one of the frontlines in the more general anti-institutional struggle against states and nations, we choose not to appear in front of any kind of committee that will do us a favour and allow us not to serve the military. Something like this would require our participation in a role playing game, where we would again have to “lose” our values and pretend that we wish to serve in the army but we are not able to, due to some psychological or physical disease; while at the same time we would have to “legitimise” the method which the very same institution we oppose to, uses as a valve of relieving the pressure of the problem of draft evaders.

The same criteria motivate us also for refusing the alternative social service. An alternative service in other words to the greek state, where terms and conditions are put unilaterally by the one that is in the position of power. The greek state ironically defines what constitutes social contribution and attempts to encompass us in it. Ironically, because the truth of the matter is that it has a great spectrum of social services to show off to its citizens, directing them to the path of well-being: from the increase in suicides during the “crisis” period (or more precisely the widening of the economic inequality gap), the sell-off of natural landscapes for profiteering purposes (e.g. the case of gold mining in Skouries in Chalkidiki); to the subsidies of the ecocidal agriculture and the enclosure-commodification of naturally abundant resources such as water and energy. **On the other hand, we believe to have the foundational values to judge by ourselves what really constitutes social contribution and self-determine how we will allocate our time wherever and however we want, without the interference of any power structure.**

Oppression and assimilation

For our choice of not doing our military service, the greek state “rewards” us with a variety of penal and financial prosecutions. Draft evading continues to have hard sanctions, even though it has constituted a misdemeanor since 2003, when the greek state revoked the condition of general military draft in a war period that was declared in 1974. As a consequence of being insubordinate, a prohibition of exiting the country is enforced, which in conjunction with the inability of issuing a passport, functions as a means of restricting our “free” movement to other countries. The so called national enemies have to remain restricted with fewer “privileges” from the rest of society, when they directly question the states’ “fundamental principles”. **Our confinement in the country we happened to be born, is just the result of the state’s vindictiveness towards our refusal to accept the national identity.**

In addition to these sanctions, we receive countless disturbances from the army and police services with the goal of convincing us to enlist. Since 2013, these disturbances have been amplified by the arrests of total objectors of army with the process of flagrante delicto, one more “compliment” by the greek state to those that resist. Non-compliance led to military courts, which put us on trial for our choice to refuse to kill and be killed for the nation.

Following the prosecutions, with a law enacted by ministers of finance and national defense G.Papakonstantinou and E. Venizelos from 2010 onwards, the addition of an administrative fine amounting to 6000 euros has been enforced. This fine is sent from the army agencies to the corresponding tax offices which in turn validate it and take the responsibility to collect it. Hence, an attempt of depoliticising the very refusal of the army is observed, since the apparent oppressive measure (fine) towards the total objectors of army is lost in the tax registries and dealt with as one more type of private debt that someone has towards the government. These enforced debts lead us subsequently to financial restrictions and blackmails. The inability to issue tax clearance, the workplace difficulties of freelancers and the blocking and foreclosure of bank accounts seen in the recent period, are just a small number of them.

The “romantic” stories, though, between the greek state and the draft evaders do not end here. The last move is a law enacted by the blimpish minister of national defense P.Kamenos in the beginning of 2016. The army agencies do not neglect to remind it to us, via post and email, inviting us to sort out our duties until the end of 2017. As a sign of generosity, all sanctions will be revoked whether these are financial or penal. Simultaneously, even though the military courts that took place in the last few months have lapsed (due to a decree for the decongestion of the courts), the fines keep being delivered unstopably. When the period of “compliance” expires, though, and we are the only ones left refusing to compromise, we estimate that we will receive a particularly great “loving care”.

Hence, draft evaders, and foremost total objectors of army, have been over time the ideal test tubes of oppression, so that its applications can be expanded widely across groups of social resistance. Disproportionate prosecutions for “small crimes” that do have though political characteristics, as well as administrative fines for acts of social resistance, are a probable image from the not-too-distant future.

National narrative and national unity

One of the ideologies constantly used by states in periods of economic and institutional crises, which lead on one hand to social and institutional transformations (obviously benefiting the power structures) and on the other to social opposition, is that of the so called national unity. The manufactured concept of the nation (a creation of the 18th century) aims to give common characteristics to populations, which in a different case might not culturally intersect at any level; they just happen to live in a specific geographical region under the same authority. National unity gives to these populations a common feeling that something good is taking place for everyone. It attempts to mislead from the criticism of the dominant institutions and consequently from the social reactions and resistance at large and give a meaning and alibi in their political games. The use of course of the national narrative, with the greater goal of the so called “exit from the crisis” -a favourite phrase of the powers that be- aims to form a false image. It is about the pseudo-ideology that everyone is affected to the same extent from the crisis, so the “struggle” and sacrifices for overcoming the crisis is devoid of classes and divisions.

On our part, we do not believe that we are all affected the same. Apparently, the owners of wealth and power always find their recourse in a crisis period and eventually increase their profit and capital. On the contrary, the subaltern are the ones that experience the consequences of the crisis, through the degradation of their lives. Furthermore, we do not have any delusion whether national unity can be the missing link in the social struggles, since the very notion of a nation is molded to favour those that exert and manage power. We do not feel any unity based on this kind of characteristics, because we do not foster any patriotic or national feeling. Instead, we feel connected through social and class means with all the oppressed of the world and it is with them that we want to unify our struggles, being in solidarity beyond any national characteristics.

Army – For the security from the external enemy...

The use of language has always been used as a tool for the distortion of reality by the ruling class, for the purpose of idealizing non-legitimate events or events likely to cause social repulsion, in an effort to appease social reactions. At the current historical period, a classic example is the concept of security. This term, which actually reflects a whole ideology, is repeatedly being used by the institutions of power as a euphemism not only to secure their interests but also for the surveillance and repression of part of society. But let us elaborate on this a bit...

In order for the states to justify the war operations outside their borders, while they are playing geostrategic/geopolitical games to generate capital expansion and pillage natural resources, they have come up with several nice expressions like: humanitarian interventions to protect certain population groups, restoration of democracy (from dictatorships), operations against terrorist groups etc. All these are rationalized in the name of security provision either towards populations in the areas where the operations are taking place, or towards populations in western states against national threats (e.g. terrorism).



The substantial outcome is, however, a state of total insecurity portrayed in civilian carnage, in the ruins of entire cities and the destruction of basic supportive infrastructure belonging to local populations, in the ecological genocide (e.g. the use of depleted uranium from NATO in the case of Kosovo) and in the displacement of millions that are consequently driven to migration. In other words, the term international terrorism is perfectly suited to describe, by all means, the war operations of the states themselves and the claim on security is just an imaginative fairytale steeped in blood.

The same armies that rape and plunder cities and impoverish populations, providing in this way, a fertile ground for the creation of hate and religious fundamentalism, are the very ones that go out at the metropolises pretending the social protectors and the supposedly solvers of the problems that they have created in the first place. Protectors against the fear of the “asymmetric terrorist threat” that is potentially found -according to them- in every migrant. Based on that fear, a whole complex of industries is developed and thrives with profits of billions: surveillance technologies, research programs, lethal fences (that lead migrants across sea passages into drowning), detention centres for those who escaped drowning, deportations for those who do not fit, patrols and security of terrestrial and sea borders, drones for surveillance and attacks against “terrorist targets”, and, of course, all the remaining war industry whose new attacks complete this recurring cycle. A multitude of NGO’s fills the puzzle of profiteering on the migrants’ bodies coming as modern missionaries of altruism to address the effects of war in terms of humanitarian aid. Absorbed by this patchwork, and always with the unconditional support of the media, which acts as a genuine diffusion mechanism of the pervading ideologies and distractor of reality, a huge part of society becomes unable to see the root causes of these problems and starts accepting this permanent state of fear as a normality, living alongside with the delusions that the army has a meaningful social role.

The greek army, in turn (even if it has yet to appear on the roads of the greek territory as a protector from terrorist attacks, like the armies in other European capitals), is trying to whitewash its murderous and nationalistic profile, by being the basic administrator of the “refugee crisis”. Seeking to secure social acceptance and praise, it ironically masquerades in its “humanitarian” guise and manages the persecuted of this world with its usual distinguishing cynicism. Having played a significant role in their displacement (by being part of the...peacekeeping operations at Congo, Iraq, W. Sahara, Somalia, Soudan, Lebanon, Chad, Afghanistan, Mali, Central African Democracy etc.) stands... in solidarity with the migrants as long as the lights of publicity are shining. And, of course, not without a reward, because in the army as in all other state’s structures, no service is rendered without anything adequate being required in return. The European funding and the “development” in Greece of Sy.riz.a. and An.el. are directly connected to the “refugee crisis” and the detention centres, and the army is one of the prime recipients of such funds (as from 2015 -and at least up until now- the ministry of national defence manages 89 million euros). When the lights of publicity go out, the “solidarity” of the greek army is naturally portrayed on the restriction of free movement for the uprooted populations by patrolling the terrestrial and sea borders of the greek state, on their confinement in military camps-detention centres, either closed or open -but still on islands that have been turned into floating prisons-, always under conditions of deprivation that can even result in indirect assassinations.

...and the security from the internal

Nevertheless, the euphemism of the power structures about security flourishes beyond the field of the states’ external risks. Apart from migrants, now the local population also constitutes a potential threat to security. In this case, it relates to the maintenance of the so-called systemic stability. **Being today in a period where the capitalistic system has extremely deepened social inequality, while simultaneously committing an excessive rape of the natural environment in the name of profit and with a fetishistic devotion to growth, it becomes particularly important to suppress any voice that is to call into question the dominant ideologies. It has to be easier for the social conscience to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism.**



The greek army initiates its actions once again with regard to the symptoms of this social situation (national, religious and social conflicts, population rise and economic distress, lack of basic resources, climate change etc.), rather than the causes (the socio- economic system and the social relations which it creates and reproduces), and by working together with other (inter)governmental organisations, is preparing to safeguard the status quo within the territory of the state it serves. Apart from its well known history of its role as a strike-breaker, it is now in the process of policification and prepares itself for the repression of social reactions. It is being trained to address “mob actions during peacekeeping missions” (Veroia, March 2002), to deal with demonstrators against NATO” (Papagou, June 2006), or mob repression (“Kallimachos”, Kilkis, 2011 and 2013) etc. In fact, in October 2012, due to the shipyard workers’ raid on the ministry of national defence after a demonstration, the 71 air cavalry brigade, which specializes in crowd and riot control, was called to train officers of inter-sectoral military police for protecting the ministry and other military places. The confirmation of the above came in a court room during a trial of a total army objector, where we witnessed a confession from a former army lieutenant, conceding the order issued to all the military camps in the uprising of December 2008 , to be alerted and ready to engage.

Either external, or internal, the fabricated enemy is everywhere. The doctrine of security is universalised and diffused in every aspect of society. The phrase of the french prime minister Manuel Valls that “security is the greatest of all freedoms”, shows the early signs of an upcoming dystopian future. A state of fear and securocracy, in which all social and political affairs within and outside a country can be transformed (if they are defined as such by the authorities) into issues of (inter)national security. In these societies of fear and permanent insecurity, where the army constitutes an essential pillar for their preservation, the choice of total army objection comes ultimately as a bulwark.



A few words for closing

All the above are just a few of the reasons why we deny to serve the army of the greek state, and because of this choice, it prosecutes us. **Even though the state is the very one which constructs weapons** (e.g. the repurposing of a coin factory at Kefalovryso for the construction of bullets), **which participates in murderous wars, takes part in the pillaging of natural resources and in the displacement of populations** -lying that all these happen for the common good-, **this same state is calling us criminals and prosecutes us for the heinous “crime” of draft evasion**, or to put it more accurately, **for our will to live in a society free of war, racism, nationalism, sexism, militarism and fabricated nation-states.**

Like other total army objectors, we have not been granted immunity from the oppressive treats of the greek state and more specifically from its economic version, of the 6000 euros fine. For this, we offer our warmest thanks to the greek state but we are not going to give way to the blackmail, or get charmed by the Sirens of assimilation that call out on us to resolve our outstanding issues. For these reasons we deny to pay whatever fine is imposed on us as a consequence of our choice and we are not going to give in to this offer of truce -which would actually mean to reduce our moral standards- or change our stance in the case of future prosecutions.

In the current historic context, **the stance of total army objection** provided it is not approached from the superficial perspective of the mandatory military service but from that of a general attitude to life, makes its small contribution by adding an extra piece of disobedience against the playing cards of the power structures. **It does not only concern men from the age of 18**, when the state first calls you in the bosom of its authoritative indoctrination, **until the age of 45**, when it believes that you will no longer offer a fertile ground for conscience change. **It also concerns whoever realises that all the values created and reproduced by the army are not compatible with the values of the society that they envision.** It is a stance that reflects, a continuous attitude to life, until actualizing a free society of solidarity and equality.

For a free society, not even one hour in the army

Spyros Kaloudis / Kostas Malakasis

April 2017

