

A few words about the Skouries area in Chalkidiki

...and the state's ultimate abetment to the bosses' plans





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xorostiskarmaniolas@gmail.com
xorostiskarmaniolas.espivblogs.net

N.E Chalkidiki may seem very far away. Too far away for us to have a direct understanding of the struggle waged by local people against the creation of an open goldmine in the area. Too far to be clearly manifested that this struggle encapsulates social resistances which strike at the heart of sovereignty – and it gets stricken for that. Perhaps, even further away for us to shape a strong movement of assistance and solidarity in this struggle. Yet N.E Chalkidiki can be located so close to us, as does every human on this planet who defends the natural environment in which s/he lives, who is opposed to the orders of voracious capitalistic development, who ultimately gives a struggle for her/his own freedom and dignity.

The long-lasting resistance coming from the villages Ierissos and Megali Panagia, against the creation of an open goldmine in their home, comes to succeed other older, dynamic and even winning struggles in the region, against similar plans. However, the current crisis of the capitalist system, which is portrayed in this case as a financial crisis sweeping society and creating conditions of exemption, constitutes for the state a convenient ground for blackmailing in order to completely impose a brutal neoliberalism. What is at stake in Skouries is not just a matter of "environmental sensitivity" towards "growth vision." What is at stake in Skouries is the doctrine that will define our lives in the near future.

Modern conquistadors

In the 16th century it was the quest for "the rivers of gold", the mythical El Dorado, that drew conquistadors to the New World. Whole civilizations in central and south America were conquered, looted and in the end annihilated with unbelievable cruelty, because the "explorers" of the Spanish court wanted to exploit the mineral wealth and the land of natives.

Later on, it was Africa that suffered from the "curse of prosperous natural resources", during the phase of imperialism in the 19th century, in order to supply the colonies' metropolises, as well as to open up to new markets. The European "civilizing" elites made a fortune out of it, turning the "underdeveloped" Africans to slaves.

Nowadays, the invasion of national and multinational capital in indigenous micro-societies is conducted with an admirable cooperation of states – the ones that are trampled on as well [1]. The exploitation of nature takes place in an unprecedented scale, in accordance to current technological potential. The ensuing ecological degradation is huge, resulting in a situation where local communities lack basic survival resources. Natural resources are being plundered by the supranational capitalism market, with the consent/connivance of local states and capitalists.

Nature is cut up, patented and commercialized. Water resources and distribution are privatized, often in favor of major industries such as metallurgy; consequently, rivers dry up. Huge areas with cultivation potential are merchandised to serve the cycle of the international food system, at the same time as GMO monopolies control/own the seeds, that is, the source

[1] In those few times when there is no consensus, extortions, coups and wars are applied.

of life. European industrial fleets, either by following the law or arbitrarily, plunder the oceans of fish and other forms of life. The very air we breathe, the ability of trees to produce oxygen, is traded in the well-known carbon trading market to "save the planet".

These and many other examples are not neutral "environmental" issues, but they are in complete agreement with the dominant capitalist system which produces and reproduces itself, by looting natural resources and having a direct impact on the ability of local societies to ensure decent livelihood through symbiotic relationships with the environment – whether they are farmers in India or fishermen in Senegal or indigenous communities in Chile and Brazil. Or if it is in this case, the villages in Chalkidiki.

A tomb made of gold

"Hellas Gold S.A." This is the name of the modern conquistadors in N.E Chalkidiki. It is a Greek company now owned 95% by the Canadian multinational Eldorado Gold and 5% by Aktor, a construction company owned by the "national" contractor Bobolas (translation team's comment: interestingly enough, Bobolas is one of the main contractors to undertake most of major state construction projects).

The company's investment plan centerpiece foresees the creation of an open goldmine, in the forest of Skouries. That is, if their plans succeed, approximately 4,000 acres of pristine forest of rare biodiversity and hundred year old beeches and oaks -impossible to replenish- will be scoured. In their place a crater with a total diameter of about 2,000 meters will be opened, serving the surface and underground mining of ore, while dams will be created for depositing 346 million tons of waste arising from the processing.

It is only enough to consider that the content of the ground in gold, in the specific area, equals to 0,8 gr per ton and that is only to perceive the magnitude of the disaster that is about to take place. Literally, it takes about two mountains of earth in order to make two golden rings.

We should also inform those that like to present the current investment plan as a continuation of a long mineral activity in Northern East Chalkidiki, that during 2500 years of activity, 30 tons were mined while 20 of them after 1927. Nowadays, the estimated amount that is about to be mined in the next years, according to the company's investment plan, reaches 200 million tons!

All these drillings combined with the water mineral activity and the different enrichment procedures will dry up the whole mountain Kakavos, a place where the locals embraced as a savior in times of starvation during the German occupation. As Mt Kakavos is the main source of water in N. Chalkidiki, all villages in the area won't have access to clean drinking water, while streams of water under the ground as well on the surface run the risk to be polluted by chemicals necessary in the mining process.

For the trucks carrying tailings, large roads are required to be built, so toxic dust will cover the village of Megali Panagia, while the port of Stratoní will be turned into a hub, with the capacity of receiving industrial ships transporting commodities and wastes. In a nutshell, a beautiful land bountied with forests and sea will become Dante's inferno.

But still, this will only be the beginning. "Hellas Gold" is granted the mining rights of an area of 317,000 acres in total, for which the company has already developed an exploitation plan. Immediately after they set their foot in Skouries they will move on to neighboring deposits, whether it is gold, silver, copper or zinc. In other words, the whole area at the north-east part of Chalkidiki peninsula will be torn down (or razed).

Again, this will only be the beginning. This specific "investment", which has been blocked by the local residents' tenacious struggle for many years, signifies a milestone for a number of enterprises that covet the underground deposits in the rest of Northern Greece and have waited for the configuration of a "investment-friendly" environment. So, the very moment "Hellas Gold" starts the Skouries project, it will essentially mean that the green light has been given, and the 317.000 acres in Chalkidiki will be followed by 175.000 acres in Kilis, 130.000 acres in Thrace and so on. A queue of corporations already have their eye on their prey, like proper crows, ready to attack.

The entire northern Greece area will be a mining zone and inhabitants will be searching for a place to stand among craters, dynamites that will be shaking the ground and dams with toxic waste that will be polluting the sea. The entire northern Greece area will be a special economic zone, prey to the mining corporations that will bring the so called growth. How else will the Greek state become "the first one in gold production in Europe"? [2]

The initiation of "Hellas Gold" investment plan, that would bring to life all the aforementioned, was delayed due to the absence of an approval. The approval of the Study of Environmental Consequences of the project. This study is considered to be flimsy by a number of scientific departments such as the Environmental Council of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, the Hellenic Forestry Society, even the Technical Chamber of Greece. However, during this special period marked by the economic memorandum between the Greek state, the IMF, the ECB and the EC (translation team's comment: the so-called "troika"), by fast-track bills and decree-laws, nature and the environment are the insignificant victims of economic growth. In this context in June 2011 G. Papakonstantinou is appointed the crucial position of the Minister of Environment. Papakonstantinou was the former Minister of Finance that signed the first memorandum with the troika that significantly lowered wages and pensions and concealed a list of potential tax evaders (the so-called Lagarde list) and so on. Within 20 days after he was proclaimed minister he signed the approval for the Study of Environmental Consequences of the project.

[2] Relevant article in Bloomberg 9/10/12, with reference to this perspective, adding water to the propaganda mill of all sorts of local prospective gold diggers.

European El Dorado

The prospector delirium which exploded internationally during the last years can be understood from capitalists' point of view if we consider that in September 2011, the price of the gold stock market reached a record high, 1.900 dollars per ounce, whereas the average price in 2012 was 1.600 dollars per ounce. For a comparison, the average price during the years 1980-2005 was 400 dollars per ounce. The unreliability of the stock markets during the crisis led to the re-initiation of investments for "reliable" gold, which then led to new stock markets speculations and as a consequence today it has become profitable for companies to exploit it, even in "grindings".

Gold mining has always been one of the most voracious domains of natural resources exploitation, and nowadays one of the most ruthless when it comes to the way it is imposed on local communities. Mining companies thresh the planet, literally changing the map of the regions that are active in, with large scale interventions in vast areas of land. They have previously established their dominance locally through the forced displacement of entire villages with the use of brutal, and sometimes really murderous force. Countries hosting current "investments" are mostly very willing to contribute to this, sometimes either with legal cover up offered to criminal corporations, or more actively with the support of national police or army. If, nevertheless, something more drastic is needed, private armies or paramilitaries take action. Thus landscapes of unique beauty and ecological value, forests, rivers and whole mountain ranges disappear, while local communities are wiped out and forced to move to new settlements. The social organization is dissolved and the residents end up being used as cheap expendable labor, corporate slaves for as long as the duration of the earth's exploitation lasts. After the completion of the turnover, usually 20-25 years later, all that's left is desolation and destruction.

If this scene was familiar in Latin America and Africa and now it just intensifies, new virgin territories such as Mongolia's vast steppes, are getting in the cross hairs of mining companies. And finally, not even Europe, which has not allowed this kind of looting of large areas in its territory until today, is any longer prepared to resist the gold rush within the current swirling economic vortex. Thus, the mining industry now touches upon a new frontier, which so far was minimally 'protected' by the acquisition of basic individual and collective rights, broadening the looting towards the periphery.

Obviously, Europe has also realized the importance of development, therefore significant resistance movements have emerged against industrialization [3] nuclear power [4] and more recently against high speed trains [5]. Let us not forget that in 1986 the soviet version of growth led to the nuclear nightmare of Chernobyl, along with the so called second Chernobyl of Europe, at Baia Mare, in Romania where the cyanide spill gave a small taste of the consequences of even small-scale gold mining [6], taking into

[3] *Loudites movement, during the last decades of the 18th and the early 19th century. During recent decades, Primitivism.*

[4] *Germany, resistance against the transportation of nuclear waste from France to Germany in railway wagons, the so called Castor.*

[5] *'No tav', in France and Italy.*

[6] *The cyanide spill from the waste pit of a factory in Baia Mare, Romania that processed by-products of a previous gold mining venture, was a great shock in*

consideration that Europe doesn't have the vast lands of Africa or Latin America where a problem like that could be "hidden". And after all it might be said that the price of growth "westerners" have paid heavily, is their utter alienation from natural environment and their assimilation into a lifestyle, where nature plays at best the role of an escapade or a beautiful scenery that cuts in their road trips, but with which they have no organic relationship [7].

Nonetheless, at the same time in Europe, the facet of the social contract connected with the rhetoric of "environmental protection" imposed the minimum institutional environmental requirements, which of course were made flexible by state and capital. Under the modern economic conditions though, just like under any other emergency situation that the state defines as such within a crisis and with European societies taken by fear of survival and insecurity, the rhetoric of growth sweeps away every counter-argument, just when the dogma of brutal neoliberalism attempts to relentlessly and massively dominate on European territory.

Today, the European countries, especially the ones ravaged by the economic crisis like Greece, Romania and Spain, invoke the Athenian commonwealth which was sponsored from the silver mines in Lavrio, invoke the Pangaion mountain which feeded Philippos' and Alexander's dynasties, they even invoke the glory of the Roman empire which was based on gold and silver from the mines of today's Romania and Spain respectively, in order to promote and legalize the predatory activity of the mining companies at their land. They feed people on the fairytale of development, while sprinkling with glitter the impending environmental and social destruction.

2000 for the European public sphere. 100.000 cubic meters of cyanide-contaminated water, containing an estimated 100 tonnes of cyanides were spilled to the nearby rivers all the way to Danube, with the obvious effects to Romania, Hungary and Serbia. Hundreds of thousands of dead fish floated on the rivers in the following days, while the drinking water supply of over 2 million people was contaminated. In 2010 European Parliament issued a decree suggesting a ban on cyanide usage from the mining industry throughout the EU. Nevertheless only Hungary, Czech Republic and Germany have adopted it. The reason is quite simple. Cyanidation is the cheapest and most effective way for companies to collect even gold trimmings from the subsoil.

[7] "How can somebody sell or buy the sky or the warmth of the earth? The idea sounds rather peculiar, as we don't own the breeze in the air or the clarity of water. How is it possible to actually buy them?" Our ways are different than yours. The sight of your cities is hurting the redskin person's eyes. Your noise is annoying our ears. But this might happen because I am wild and I don't understand. We do know this: The earth does not belong to man. Man belongs to the earth. As we haven't created the web of life, we are just a fibre of it. If we challenge a disaster in the web (of the earth), the consequences will occur to ourselves. You are infecting your bed and one night you will suffocate by your own shit", answered in 1855, Seattle, chief of Duwamish to the president of United States, Franklin Piers, when he asked them to buy their land.

Treasure hunting in N.E. Chalkidiki – short chronicle

The mining activity in the area of N.E. Chalkidiki is indeed not new, but nevertheless it has never had the intensity and characteristics that is about to acquire today [8].

Mines appear for the first time in classic antiquity, while they constitute the main funding source for the Macedonian dynasty. After the occupation of the area by the Romans the exploitation temporarily stops – it begun again during the Byzantine and intensified during the Othoman Empire with the production of zinc and lead. Since then, the villages in the area became known as Mantemochoria (literally meaning cast iron villages).

The recent history of mines begins in 1893, when the exploitation of the region is given to the French – Ottoman S.A., based in Paris. For the first time the name "mines of Cassandra" appeared. In 1920, the Franco-Ottoman is succeeded by The Anonymous Greek Company of Chemical Products and Fertilizers (AEECHP & L), which uses the mines mainly to obtain the necessary quantity of sulphur, the raw material for fertilizers, the use of which began to spread within industrial agriculture. Stratonis was at the time the cargo area of the ore, while after the war in Anatolia (a.k.a. Asia Minor) and the settlement of refugees coming from a mining village nearby Ellispontos, the first community was built using sketchy shacks.

In 1946, the stocks' majority of The Anonymous Greek Company of Chemical Products and Fertilizers (AEECHP & L) was passed over to well known Bodosakis, who further expanded the mining business. In 1970, an enrichment factory was built on the coast of Stratonis, starting the production of mixed sulphide ores, while subsidized housing were constructed as well. Within two years time the mine site at Olympiada also gets started, where a lead/ zinc/ gold/ silver placer was discovered since 1960. The company of Bodosakis processed only lead and zinc, the metals that were needed by his arms industry PYR.KAL. In a short time a new enrichment factory is built at Olympiada and its products reach the Stratonis port for transportation. The intensified mining process during that time period has "gifted" the whole area with its current open wounds, i.e. open pits of toxic waste, at the mercy of winds and rain.

However, the first attempt to set up a modern goldmining site at northern Chalkidiki was in 1987, through the state funded METBA (Metallurgy Aegean Industry). It should be noted that goldmining is a heavily damaging process for the environment, more so than any other mining process used in the area, because the main method for extracting gold worldwide -since sluice boxes – is cyanidation, i.e. the usage of highly dangerous sodium cyanide. Locals from Olympiada, Varvara and Strymonis are not persuaded by the Environmental Study, according to which the environmental effects are non existent. After intense protests, in 1989 they succeed in actually cancelling the investment, as well as taking down the opening ceremony of the factory at Olympiada, after clashes with police. This is the first landmark in a long

[8] Rich data on the mining history of the area and locals' struggle against it can be found in the published issue "Against Gold Mines" of the Open Coordinative of Thessaloniki, out of which many data was taken for this presentation.

timeline of active resistance to gold-mining in the area.

In 1992, the Anonymous Greek Company of Chemical Products and Fertilizers goes into liquidation while it remains in operation by the National Bank of Greece. Three auctions take place before the exploitation rights of the mines and all infrastructure are being sold to the Canadian multinational TVX GOLD. Specifically, on December 21, 1995, a transfer contract is signed about the Kassandra mines with the Greek affiliate company TVX HELLAS. The transfer price is estimated at 11 billion drachmas, approximately 33 million euro. The transfer agreement is considered by many as scandalous and damaging for the Greek state. The main aim of the company was the establishment of gold-mining in the Olympiada area, whereas in 1999 began the extraction of mixed sulphur in "Mavres Petres", close to Stratoniki.

Nevertheless, TVX never succeeded in becoming an established player in the area or initiating a gold-mine due to a strong local resistance movement of residents. The residents, by guarding the well-known Olympiada spot, which became a reference to their struggle, organising general assemblies as well as physically confronting the police, by occupying the national highway and burning derricks, through legal struggles in local and national courts, leading to detention of local politicians, managed to stop the plans of TVX. The efforts of the Greek state to support TVX were "touching": it declared the whole area under martial law, issuing a curfew during evenings and prohibiting public assemblies- all these taking place in the year 1997, in the dawn of PASOK's modernization project!

However, this period of false prosperity enables the Greek Council of State to weigh the results of the TVX's "golden investment". Taking into consideration that economic, social and environmental costs would be considerably more important than benefits, in 2002 the Council of State cancelled the company's investment plan. The struggle of Chaldiki residents was vindicated through legal means. In 2003, TVX declared bankruptcy and moved out of the country, leaving 472 unemployed workers and an environmental disaster of 400 million euros.

Enforcing the law of "Hellas Gold"

The political and economic establishment, determined to override the Council of State's decision, openly applied a state of lawlessness in state institutions in order to anew support the establishment of goldmining in the area. We need to note here that all these took place in a period during which the "Greek dream" was very much alive, a period just before the Olympic Games of 2004 when the doctrine of a "powerful Greece" was translated into total growth and extended corruption.

In December 2003, the TVX literally un-bankrupts (!) in order to transfer the mines to the Greek state, for 11 mil euros. As a result, the company was relieved of environmental damage costs, but also of compensation payment to dismissed workers. That same day, on 12/12/2003, the mines are transferred to "Hellas Gold" for 11 mil euros. The new company is waived from the obligation to compensate for any environmental damage that has already occurred, and from the obligation for recruiting of workers that have been laid off from the previous company. Everything is undertaken by the Greek state.

Note, "Hellas Gold" has been founded just three days before the transaction! It had the minimum authorised share capital permitted by law and only two natural persons as shareholders! Incidentally, both are senior executives of manufacturing AKTOR owned by Bobolas, but they still do not appear anywhere officially. The Mines of Cassandra were given to this company, owned by Bobola's people, without an international open procurement as officially required, but only through the use of private contracts!

Inspirator and executor of this transfer is the deputy minister of Finance Christos Pachtas, elected with Simiti's government (translation team's comment: PASOK, social-democrats – the currently co-governing party), who throughout his political career acted only in favor of the goldmines' operation in N.E. Chalkidiki. When he was positioned in the Ministry of Industry, he played a – significant- role in the transfer of the mines to TVX. Today, from the position of the Mayor of Aristotle, the municipality where the mines geographically belong, he is one of the greatest propagandists and extortionists in favor of goldmines.

When in January 2004 Pachtas brought the transfer contract in the parliament so that it would be ratified, he presented an investment plan with the participation of AKTOR and European Goldfields, a small ghost-company, probing for the big industry involved in the transfer. But, neither AKTOR nor European Goldfields typically existed anywhere, with the exception of a signed memorandum of cooperation between them, if and when the Greek State approved the transfer – which soon happened. The state acted as an intermediate so that the private sector can do its job. After that, with constant trading capital between them, European Goldfields ended up owning 95% of the Hellenic Gold and AKTOR the remaining 5%, while Bobolas has gained several hundred millions and he's engaged exclusively in every construction project. The game is completed in February 2012, when Eldorado Gold acquires the entire percentage of European Goldfields, since the territory is completely clear from annoying bureaucracy and the scooped machines are waiting to start the act of destruction.

Let's take a look at some interesting numbers: 6 months after the transfer was completed, the market value of the Cassandra Mines, sold for 11 million

euros, was raised to 408 million euros, according to an independent rating agency. In 2008, the European Commission concluded that the Greek state hasn't secured its interests in the best possible way, during the transaction□ on the contrary, it was assumed that its handling of the matter worked as an illegally granted state aid of 15,3 million euros to the company, an amount requested to be returned to the Greek state with the addition of the interests from Hellas Gold. The state, nevertheless, appealed against this decision and refused to levy the fine from the company!

Finally, the value of the minerals found at the Kassandra mines is estimated today at around 16 billion dollars. However, according to the mining code voted during the dictatorship and valid still nowadays, the company that exploits the minerals is not obliged to reimburse the public rights of the extracted minerals, so the profit of the public would be in reality zero.

The facts above are not expressed neither because they surprise, nor because they occasionally harm the public interest, but because they unveil in a clear manner the way authority works in capitalism and more precisely in the Greek capitalist system. And all these during a period when the Greek state was spreading a propaganda concerning the great levels of growth and was processing neo-liberal changes, pleading for "modernisation" and "transparency".

The domination of nature by man stems from the very real domination of human by human (Murray Bookchin)

"The law will also be applied to the goldmines of Chalkidiki" [9]. That was the statement of Minister Dendias just a few days after he was appointed at the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection by the coalition government, replying to the complaints concerning brutal repression by riot police, who even used plastic bullets, during a residents' protest in the forest of Skouries. Shortly, with an unsigned article, "Kathimerini" newspaper welcomed the "pivotal reaction" of the minister, by baptising the residents' movement in Chalkidiki a "far-left squads raid", in correlation to the far-right Golden Dawn -who "believe they can stop a legitimate investment just because they want to" [10]. The construction of the theory of two extremes is applied in this situation in a characteristic way in order to suppress social rights, since it reveals that in the modern totalitarian type of democracy people cannot have a say for their own lives.

So what if the violation of legality, as they themselves have set, governs each step towards the establishment of the mines? Under the state of emergency that in times of crisis attempts to be established in every aspect of social life, the state has enlisted its entire ideological and suppressant mechanism in order to impose onto the economic and political field El Dorado's law [11]. Whatever was planned during the dominance of the false imaginary of prosperity, it is forcefully imposed now during the economic crisis.

In this context, the waiting for the final ruling of the Court of State (CoS), following the appeal of the residents against the new investment plan of "Hellas Gold", seems without meaning. Time is running out, making a ruling, like the one on TVX, impossible. Besides, after a "helpful" visit from a troika unit, the Council of State (CoS) has already given a clear clue, that it will align with the current political will. So, in July, 2012 the CoS issued a temporary consultum giving the company a green light for performing mining related

[9] Radio SKAI, 6/8/2012.

[10] Determination against extremists – Kathimerini 11-09-12: "What took place in Rafina but also in Chalkidiki these last days, is very alarming. Far-right and far-left extremists have decided to take the law in their own hands and to apply it as they wish. Those indescribable cases of violence reveal how dangerous it has been to not follow the law and order for many years, due to the accountable politicians' cowardice behaviour and inability. Now, far-right hardliners consider their task to control and decide who is a legal immigrant and who is not, whereas far-left groups consider their task to block any legal investment because they do not like it. The one extreme complements the other, uncontrolled lawlessness and actions of a group of hooligans caused the reaction of another one and the whole country is tumbling into a spiral of uncontrolled violence. The minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection timely and accurately reacted but further determination is needed in order to stop this damaging slope".

[11] "Greece can become El Dorado for investors." Statement, made by the President of Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund responsible for privatization (Financial Times, 17/9/2011), competing the euphemism of "Xenios Zeus" as the name of state pogroms against immigrants.

tasks, until it reaches its final decision. As stated in the temporary consultum "the realization of this investment is in the best interest of the Greek economy". It is rather pointless for anyone today to have hope in the institutions of a status quo legality. The propaganda on economic growth, in a time when the population faces the prospect of generalized poverty, works as a cheap blackmail in order for the capitalistic accumulation to go on unhindered. Compared to this, the protection of the environment is for the system not only insignificant, but structurally discordant.

Unfortunately, the blackmail has an impact on a part of local residents. Stratoni, the village that owes its existence to the functioning of the mines, serves as a fortress of those, mainly employees at the company and their families, who defend the expanding of the mining activities of the company. The current mining culture unfortunately leads the workers to identify themselves with the interests of "Hellas Gold" and forget about the historical struggles given by the miners in the '77 during the era of Bodosakis for better working conditions and better wages in one of the longest strikes after the dictatorship was abolished. Perhaps the reason is that this struggle has been unsuccessful because it was sabotaged from the inside. Even the recall of the women whose husbands worked in the tunnels walking around dressed in black in Mantemochoria as pneumoconiosis the occupational disease of miners massacred the area due to the bad working conditions has been put aside. Now development coincides with a temporary wage, gained by working under the earth like a dormouse, and some are satisfied with it, even if it would mean the destruction of their land and the undermining of the future of their children [12].

In contrast thousands of people who react spread the movement of resistance in the region. People of all ages whose lives are bound to the mountains and the sea dare to defend their right not to breathe mining dust not to drink poison not to eat carcinogenic food. Opposed to them, they have to face the riot police and the media propaganda while they are being portrayed by the company as a minority of environmentalists that block the development of the region stigmatised as the obstacle of the public interest. Of course, as if they are not workers too, nobody made any reference to their jobs, (farmers, fishermen, construction workers, apiarists, agriculturalists, lumberjacks, and so on) that will be lost if the mines operate, and at the same time it is being obscured that the classification of the region by the state as Mining Zone -that seeks to be expanded to other areas as well- means that no other activity can be developed freely, making the blackmail even more ruthless. Still, the dominant fact is that, despite the intentions demonstrated by the "flexible" government institutions, it cannot be

[12] 3/7/2012 Communication from GCGW (General Confederation of Greek Workers): "The protection of the environment must be combined with the protection of society and work positions, especially today that unemployment reaches terrifying proportions. The agony for the environment is essential and reasonable, as essential and reasonable is to ensure the 700 families who work and live from the specific company, but also guarantee the interests of local society and economy. Justice, which is empowered to respond, should do it soon. Until then, however, no one can and should deprive hundreds of workers from their job in the mines of Chalkidiki, or the growth potential of the area, nor yet the expectation for the maintaining of the investment, associated with the direct creation of 1,300 additional jobs in the region."

acceptable that ethical values become relativised. And as residents of the area say, anyone who has seen the forest of Skouries knows that even if there was only one who resisted, s/he would be right.

So, in the grand demonstration of October 21st which was fiercely attacked by the riot police, 14 people were arrested on grounds of "revolt". Indeed, the residents of northeastern Chalkidiki who react to the goldmines of "Hellas Gold", are unlawful insurgents, opposing the modern state and capitalist totalitarianism, which strives to thresh every aspect of society, leading to impoverishment, restriction of freedoms and submission to a wretched life.

The coalition government refers to our rich country and its oil reserves, hydrocarbons, natural gas, sun and wind, setting their exploitation as first priority. Some count on it, hoping to disentangle from poverty, clinging on yet another "Big Idea". Others are concerned about a public property sell-off, since it is proven, e.g in the case of Kassandra Mines, that the profits will be collected by foreigners.

However, this investment would not be acceptable even if there was a profit for the Greek state. The message is clear, even for those who want to deceive themselves into the preservation of national wealth, without them ever understanding that upper and lower classes have nothing in common: nothing will remain standing from the neoliberal or state-capitalism steamroller.

There is no place for resistance and struggle in the state's and capital's "progress" and "constitutionality". The doctrine of "zero tolerance" and "iron fist" already tramples on the heads of the oppressed, who struggle against the looting of nature, the devaluation of their labor power, against poverty and affliction imposed by the local and multinational capital. The string of brutal repression in Skouries is associated with the dissolution of strikes by riot police (i.e. Halivourgia Ellados – Greek Steel Industry) and their planned prohibition, the requisition of public transportation workers and seafarers, the attacks and evacuations of occupied centres and self-organized revolutionary projects. Additionally, with the massive manhunts of "Xenios Zeus" and the murders of immigrants, such as Bampakar Entagie and Sachtzat Lukman by state and fascist hands, rigged trials and devastating penalties against rebels, tortures by the uniformed thugs of Hellenic Police towards the 15 people participating in the antifascist motorcycle patrol and the 4 anarchists in Velvento, Kozani.

The only future reserved for residents of N.E. Chalkidiki is the environmental destruction and the ruin of their villages. And this is exactly the problem, that the only perspective the capitalist continuum is reserving for our future through the looting of natural resources, is to deprive the communities from every possibility to organize themselves based on free will. When Chalkidiki will be flooded with gold and the Aegean Sea with oil, the islands will be filled with wind turbines and the valleys of Thessaly with solar panels, people won't even have one inch left of land and freedom to enjoy the crumbs that capitalists will throw to them.

Our only hope lies with daring to imagine life outside the existing structure. Dare to redefine our needs and our relationship with nature, beyond the wide-ranging and cumulative prism imposed by capitalism. Let us organize our common struggles whether we are labored workers, illegal occupiers or strikers. Let us dare to live. And in this process, the struggle of the people of Chalkidiki is the key. It is a struggle for us all.

*Gold? yellow, glittering, precious gold? No, gods,
I am no idle votarist [...]
Thus much of this will make black white, foul fair,
Wrong right, base noble, old young, coward valiant.
Ha, you gods! why this? what this, you gods? Why, this
Will lug your priests and servants from your sides,
Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads:
This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions, bless the accursed,
Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves
And give them title, knee and approbation
With senators on the bench: this is it
That makes the wappen'd widow wed again;
She, whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores
Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices
To the April day again. Come, damned earth,
Thou common whore of mankind, that put'st odds
Among the route of nations.*

solidarity

with the residents' struggle in chalkidiki

