

# MORE ON CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions can be writings in any style. We ask that text does not exceed 1,500 words per contribution.

Contributions can be anonymous.

Writers are welcome to include any/all of the following if they wish to but we would like to stress that **there is no obligation to include any identifying information about yourself at all.**

- Your name or a pseudonym
- Your age
- Your charge/s
- Your sentence duration and expected release date
- Your occupation/hobbies prior to incarceration
- Any other details you would like published about yourself

You are also welcome to include the following, which would never be published or shared:

- An address for you to receive a copy of the published journal (this could either be your address in prison or an address on the outside you can access at a later date - we appreciate your prison address may not be reliable if you are moved or if the journal is deemed inappropriate by authorities)
- A return address if you would like us to let you know we have received your contribution.

## TERMS OF PUBLICATION

Handwritten contributions will be typed unless the author requests to have a scan of the original text presented in the journal. Contributions will be typed exactly as the original is written unless the contributor indicates "PLEASE EDIT" in their entry. We will then be happy to correct any spelling or grammar errors, however we do not feel that perfect spelling and grammar are in any way necessary to meaningful communication.

We will not publish any contributions that directly or indirectly contain: racism, sexism, transphobia, nationalism, xenophobia, ableism or any other form of oppressive language.

# A NOTE FROM THE "EDITOR"

This journal obviously wouldn't exist without the contributions from those who have been affected by incarceration and shared their thoughts, their experiences and their creativity with us. Thank you to all of you.

For this first edition, I would just like to simply include the note on prisons we have included on our website:

## NOTE ON PRISONS

Suspended over our everyday lives are the shackles and cages that could be forced on us if we offend the rule of law. Law which exists to control the intricate details of our lives, from what we consume, to how we can live and love with others. These are laws we never consented to being governed by, laws that were written before we even had voices to raise, which we cannot easily (or, arguably, meaningfully) change and which do not protect us.

If we offend the rule of law by "breaking" one of these codes of conduct, we then face the brutality of the justice system. A system that again was formulated without our contributions or consent; that hurts and punishes those who offend and those who love them and leaves the greatest criminals of all, the politicians, bankers and CEOs, untouched and unexamined.

We firmly believe that with the destruction of systems of oppression such as state and capital, "crime" as we know it would largely cease to exist. We believe that if people were empowered and free to live under principles of self-determination and mutual aid, they would naturally work together to address conflict and threats against their own and others' safety and wellbeing.

We call for the abolition of all prisons and detention centers. None are free until all are free.

I hope this journal gives you understanding, hope and a glimpse of freedom.

"Editor"  
Running Wild Collective

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# I AWAKENED THIS MORN;

the eighteenth day, of the tenth month, of the year two-thousand and sixteen, at the sixth hour, exact to the second, a cool breeze caressed my face and my slumber had been the most restful in months gone by. I removed my ad hoc blinds from the glass they covered to behold the sky a vivid mix of deep blues, purples, pinks, and deepest ebony; blending each other in a most stunning array. The moon was still high in the heavens, accented by the lingering stars, it shone as if it were midst of night. Wind stirred gently in the gums that climb above the barbed wall, and caused them to sway and dance with one another sinuously and sing sibilant verses to and fro, as two large, stygian crows graced from limb to limb amongst the flickering leaves; beginning their day together. I secured a transmit of waves on which melodies sailed; to saxophone, clarinet, piano, double-bass, and percussion did I listen, transfixed, as the sun arose; commencing my perspective of its passage from nadir to zenith to nadir once more, resulting the streaks of colouration to shift their chromatism to that of light blue, oranges, reds, and whites. The moon gradually retreated from sight as dawn's rays struck at it and birds of every variation chorus as one. I breathe air into my lungs, blood courses pressure within my veins, I feel song throughout my soul, and love overwhelms my heart. I am, on this; the twenty-eighth anniversary of the day of my birth, the most human, the most alive, and the most present I have been in many, many years.



Written by:

L.D.V.T

# I DON'T KNOW HOW TO TELL THIS STORY.

I want to explain a long, complex and disputed series of events that cuts across three generations of two families like a wound, each member having their own memories and experiences of it. I definitely can't give you all that, but I hope this story, one of millions (billions?) can serve as a case study for state involvement in family violence, and how the state inevitably gets it wrong.

I want to tell you about his childhood; the years he spent lifting his little sister out of the bedroom in the middle of the night to get away from the sounds of their father bashing their mother. The times he, as a teenager, had to pull his father off his bleeding, concussed mother. But then I'd have to tell you about how she hated me, how I watched him lash out at her and did nothing, how the same thread of violence ran through all our lives but pulled us apart instead of bringing us together, and how the shame of that colours every memory I have of our relationship.

For the sake of brevity, we'll start at the first time I called the police. Without going into all the gory details, I waited for him - my ex partner, let's call him Thomas - to fall asleep and snuck my phone back from his pocket, and texted my mother asking her to send the police.

The senior officer leaned over me, standing between me and the doorway to my flat. I could hardly see the junior officer who seemed to be hiding behind him like a shy child but I recognised him immediately; he was the kid who used to bash me during recess at school when I was nine. I ended up having to change schools.

Having never had any dealings with police before, I had no reason not to trust this senior officer, so I told him everything; "He took out a knife and he threatened to kill me and our daughter. I said I just wanted to leave and go to my Mum's but he locked me inside and wouldn't let me go." I asked him what would happen if I pressed charges, and the officer told me that he'd be released tomorrow and sentenced to participation in a group program. I'd been wanting him to go to one for months, and I thought perhaps a night in custody would show him that his behaviour wasn't okay.

Giving the statement to the police was a nightmare. The officer kept getting the details wrong and I'd correct him, but he'd just reword his incorrect interpretation. After three hours of this, I gave up and agreed. The cops said I'd get a call in the morning, so when I heard nothing by midday, I phoned the court myself.

"He's been remanded; he was denied bail."

I was in shock. The officers never even mentioned this was even a possibility.

"Why?"

"The nature of the charges, they were too serious for bail to be granted."

This is the moment I realised the mistake I'd made. Thomas was charged with three indictable offences (analogous to felonies, for those in the United States) including threats to kill and deprivation of liberty. The maximum sentence for deprivation of liberty is ten years in prison. I realised that the first cop I spoke to knew this was the most likely outcome; I'd told

him about the 'threats to kill' and how Thomas wouldn't let me leave. He lied to me so I'd give a statement.

He knew I wouldn't report this incident had I known the seriousness of the charges Thomas would face. I immediately got to work trying to fix this. I asked the police if I could withdraw my complaint; they say no, then I asked to amend it, but they said no again. I applied again after his mother died while he was in custody, 'on compassionate grounds', but this was denied. In the end, on advice from a neighbour, I wrote my own statement and had it witnessed, and submitted it to the court. The prosecution decided they didn't have enough evidence to proceed since my initial statement to them was now useless and dropped the charges, but the damage was already done.

He was in prison for six months. In that time, his mother died, and he never got to say goodbye. His father said she called out to him, didn't understand why he wasn't there, cried for him. Thomas lost his job, of course, and couldn't get another. None of his friends kept in contact, just me, making the six hour round trip twice a week on the bus with the old lady who hid acid tabs under her dentures for her grandson to sell. When his cellmate - a small time meth cook - was released, of course they got in contact, and that went about as well as you'd expect. We didn't end up injecting meth behind a petrol station in the middle of nowhere at 3am overnight, but time starts to fall apart here. Some memories dissolve when I try to hold them and others stretch on for a lifetime. The important part is that he had so much to try and escape from, and I vowed to never call the police ever again.

There's a lot I've skipped over here. The cops told DOCS everything as they have information sharing, and when the senior officer I initially spoke to learned that I'd asked to withdraw my statement, he called my mother, in violation of privacy law, and said, quote, "We don't care if he beats her black and blue and puts her six feet under."

His lawyer spoke to both of us and knew I wanted the charges dropped, so she stood in front of the judge and said I was a mentally unstable attention-seeker. She said it then turned and smiled at me, as if to say, 'this is going well!' and the absurdity of the situation hit me like Thomas's fist in my face back when I was pregnant with our first baby.

I don't expect you to have sympathy for Thomas, or for me. Women like me are, at best, weak and deluded, suffering 'Stockholm Syndrome' or 'Battered Wife Syndrome'<sup>1</sup>. I heard those terms a lot, and they provided a very convenient explanation for why I wouldn't cooperate with the police; the fact that they lied to me and the fact that I had to choose between having my power cut off and buying food for my children after losing his income was never mentioned. These terms invoke a clear narrative wherein relationships society finds difficult or unpalatable can be easily dismissed, and the deep complexities of human relationships are reduced to pop psychology<sup>1</sup>. It's a very easy way to silence victims of crime who dare to criticize the legal system, asserting the State's position as true and the victim's position as not only false but deranged.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Adorjan, 'Stockholm Syndrome As Vernacular Resource'

It's been some years now since all this, and it's never been resolved. I still carry the physical and emotional scars, and he has his own. In late night conversations over the phone - he's too scared to return to the state in case he's arrested again - he confides in me fragments of his time behind bars; "My best mate was bashed for clicking his fingers and the guards watched it happen but did nothing, the rooms were so overcrowded we had to sleep on the floor, we had to strip naked and bend over in front of the guards before and after every single visit. Sometimes I have nightmares about blood splattered across the floor of my cell like a Pollock painting". We're separated now, so I guess that is, by some metric, a resolution. His youngest child, who's turning 8 soon, doesn't remember him at all. I find it hard to call that a resolution; eventually, they'll want to know him and I don't think they'll be able to.

I don't have a solution for this, but I know what doesn't work. When the cops lie to us, they foster an adversarial relationship then blame us when we stop cooperating. They threaten to remove our children before they offer any kind of support and traumatise our partners who leave even more normalised to violence than they were before. The neighbour I mentioned previously was living with a violent alcoholic and we had our own system; when one of us heard a commotion, we'd go over there and bring the other one back to our flat where they'd be safe. What would our communities look like if we banded together to provide solutions tailored to the wants and needs of families instead of relying on the legal system that exists not for families or communities but to uphold state power? How different could this situation have turned out if someone could've confronted him about his violence directly, confronted his father, his grandfather? What if we could address the underlying causes of domestic violence; disenfranchisement, alienation, and a society that teaches men that women are objects rather than people?

Every situation is different and some survivors want punitive responses, but in my experience, most don't. My partner was a violent man, yes, but he came out of this process an unemployed man, homeless, further traumatised and introduced to a damaging and costly addiction that still controls his life almost a decade later - and still violent. Instead of being rehabilitated, he was locked away for six months in a place where violence was part of the background noise, just like his family home growing up. This does not fix domestic violence. Even if the State succeeds in separating a couple, this violence almost always recurs against new partners. Resolving intimate partner violence requires dismantling institutions that perpetuate power imbalances and violence, and the core of this is the State. For this reason, we cannot rely on the police and the courts to fix this; they will only make it worse.



Written by:

Olive S  
Australia

# THE MAKING OF AN ANARCHIST IN PORTLAOISE PRISON

In 2010 I was sentenced to 6 years for having possession of 20 grams of explosive powder. I was to serve 4 years and 8 months in Portlaoise prison. This is not an in-depth study into prison and jails, and it is not an academic piece. It is simply an experience. My experience of jail will be different than other people's experience because no two people's experience will ever be the same.

## How people pass the time

In jail, your concept of time changes, your whole daily routine revolves around time. You repeat the same daily routine over and over again, day in, day out for months and years. The only change to your day might be a visit, getting a letter, talking to someone on the phone, having a class, or a different type of dinner.

The day of the week can determine what dinner you might have. On Friday it is always fish, peas and potatoes, and rice pudding for dessert. But all the rest of the week the different dinners will rotate. The dinners can be coddle, stew, pork chop with potatoes, bacon and cabbage, mince and potatoes.

Your daily routine will become embedded in your head like the dinners. You will wake every day at the same time, you will go for breakfast at the same time, you will eat the exact same breakfast in the exact same way, you will finish your breakfast at the same time. A person's whole day will be played out in this manner, even when you get locked into your cell for the night you will have the same ritual/routine till you go to sleep at the same time you usually do. This is not intentional, people just fall into routines.

Below is a time-table everyone goes through:

8.20am the cell doors are unlocked

12pm dinner time

12.30pm bang-up (you either get locked into your cell or locked into the rec area) 2pm bang-up ends

4pm tea

4.30pm bang-up

5.30pm bang-up ends

8.20pm locked in for the night

## How I passed the time

When I first arrived in Portlaoise, for the first few weeks I spent my time between watching telly, going to the gym, reading, and helping my comrades in construction of bodhrans<sup>2</sup>. Each

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<sup>2</sup> Bodhrans are Irish frame drums



prisoner on the landing<sup>3</sup> played their part in making bodhrans. When the bodhrans were finished, each prisoner had to paint pictures on 2 bodhrans each. These pictures would be of republican martyrs, the odd time I would paint Che Geuvara.

About 3 weeks into my incarceration, a comrade from the outside sent me in a book about Fidel Castro when he was in jail. I read in the book that when Fidel was in jail he dedicated a lot of his time to study. He studied revolutionary writings and philosophies to help him understand the struggle more and learn about how to win.

I decided I was also going to do this with my time: study writings, books on revolutionary philosophy and history of revolutions and struggles. What I read mostly for the next four years and seven months was books on Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism, Maoism, Trotskyism. Anything to do with Marxism I tried to get my hands on to read. I also read a bit into anarchism and its history, and I also read about the different Irish revolutionaries and many other revolutionaries around the world. I read books about the different revolutions, struggles and wars that happened around the globe.

I tried to compare the Anarchist and Marxist ideas on revolution, class, the state, capitalism, authoritarianism, etc, with the Irish national liberation struggle and movements. I totally got what the anarchists were saying about authoritarianism in movements. I could see it in the republican groups, living in Portlaoise prison it was a lot easier to see because in Portlaoise a different group occupied each landing, this gave me a bit of an idea of what any of the republican groups that were there might be like in power, if any of them actually ever got into power.

I think a lot of it just boils down to power and who holds it. Can a party or movement, no matter how revolutionary or well intentioned, be trusted to hold power and use the power to benefit everyone?

### Visits

Getting a visit is probably the highlight of the week for a prisoner (that's if they get a visit). Visits break the monotony of prison day. They can make the day go by a lot faster. Most prisoners would get a visit either once a week or every second week. A visit gives the prisoner a chance to talk about something different than you might normally talk about (in jail you tend to have similar conversations a lot, speaking about the same subjects a lot).

I remember one time when I was in my teens, a person I knew that was in and out of jail told me, "The only people that will visit you when you are in jail will be your family. Your family will be the only ones to give a fuck." I learned my friend was right, for the vast majority of people that get visits, they will be from either their family or a loved one. Although occasionally prisoners do get visits from a friend or an acquaintance.

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<sup>3</sup> In Portlaoise the prison population is physically divided into groups, for example when Joe was imprisoned there, first floor D block (D1) was where prisoners who aligned with CIRA (Continuity Irish Republican Army) were held, E2 held non-aligned republican prisoners, E3 held RIRA (Real Irish Republican Army) prisoners), D2-D4 held social prisoners etc.

Visits in Portlaoise were nice for a prison. Since we were political prisoners we could have tea and snacks on visits. The visiting area was made up of rows of rooms (they would have been cells a few years previously), on the doors to the visiting rooms there were large windows. These windows were for screws to look in, a screw would walk up and down the visiting area looking in the windows throughout the whole visiting time.

When going on a visit each prisoner would have to walk through a metal detector and then would get patted down by the screws, the process was repeated when returning from visits. Visitors would go through a worse search. Women visitors weren't allowed to wear bras with metal in them, when being searched the female visitor would have to pull their bra forward off their chest to show nothing is hidden behind it. All visitors would have to take off their shoes and then go through a metal detector. The screw would then give the visitors a test to see if there were any explosives or drugs on them. If there is a baby going for a visit the baby's nappy is searched. This process can be particularly intimidating for people if they've never experienced anything like this before.

### Boredom

For the first 12 months of being in jail I would count time I was there. At first it was the days, then it was the weeks, then the months. After a while I just stopped counting.

Prison is the closest to being dead while at the same time being alive. While in jail, life outside passes you by, visits, letters and phone calls are when you hear about different events or problems that are happening outside. If something negative is happening outside that involves your loved ones there's not a single thing you can do about it.

A person in jail can experience being like some type of spirit looking over their loved ones from the afterlife. You hear about the good times and the bad times, but you can never take part in them, you just sit on the side watching and listening.

The main thing that changes in prison, besides people leaving the jail and new people arriving, is the changes in the season. In the summer it is roasting hot within the block, in the winter it's freezing cold. In the summer you walk in the sunshine and heat in the yard. In winter you walk in the yard in dark evenings and grey, gloomy days. During the summer you look out your cell window (if you are up high enough in the block to be able to see out over the wall of the prison) you can see the countryside of the midlands of Ireland off in the distance, you can see the green of the country, plants, hills, and smell the scent of the countryside and nature. In the winter on the other side of the block you can see Portlaoise town in the dark, you can see the Christmas lights on people's houses and, far off in the distance, you can see the bright lights of a star shape on the steeple of a church.

Prison can be like a soap opera, at other times it can be like a comedy. Everyone knows each other's business, some people try to go out of their way to find out all of your business, some of these people are just nosey and are just looking for a bit of gossip. Others are trying to find out information about you that they may want to use against you at some point. The information they might find out they may use to create drama for you. Or a person may create drama and blame it on you. Drama can be created just out of badness or it might be because of power plays between people or groups.

Some people take part in wind ups. These wind ups aren't usually out of badness, it's mainly just for fun. One of the best ones I saw was one guy got sentenced to 9 months (extremely short sentence for a person in Portlaoise). He could never get his head around getting the 9 month sentence, he done the time hard. A few weeks before he was due to be released someone managed to get a legal document from his cell that was from the state about his case. The person who took the letter went into the computer room, scanned the letter and doctored it and wrote in it that the state was taking an appeal against the leniency of the sentence against him that they wanted to put more time on his sentence.

The lad that doctored the letter gave it to a screw to give to him as a wind up. When the screw gave him the letter the fella nearly broke down, you could see his world was shattering. The OC of the landing had to calm him down and tell him it was just a wind up.

This same wind up was repeated about 2 or 3 years later on another prisoner. But the prisoner that got the letter went further in his panic, thinking he was getting extra time he rang up his solicitor's office demanding to talk to his solicitor, the secretary told him the solicitor was going away on holidays. Shouts and roars could be heard echoing around the block screaming, "Do not get on the plane, do not get on that plane". With eruption of laughter following.

### Releases

In Portlaoise when you are coming to the end of your sentence you will be eligible for temporary release (TR). This is where the prison grants a prisoner a few days out, it's usually a weekend. A prisoner gets 1 TR for every year they do in jail, and a prisoner usually gets granted a TR for their final Christmas in prison. On my final Christmas I was granted TR, it was a long TR, every prisoner getting TR that Christmas was given five overnights. This means you have to come back on the 6th day.

It was a surreal feeling getting to walk outside the gate, then being picked up by my father, sitting in a car for the first time in years, walking into a house after not being in one for a good while feels really strange, everything feels shrunken and tiny. I sat in the house feeling fidgety not able to sit easy. I felt like I should be doing something and not just sitting there, I had a feeling of guilt not doing anything, but I didn't know what I should be actually doing. My comrade was back in prison, I felt I should have been doing something to enjoy myself, but I didn't know what that was.

There was only one thing I really wanted to do and that was to walk down the beach looking at the ocean. Before jail I wasn't much of a lover of nature, I didn't really care too much for it. But, at the same time I did enjoy walks in nature. Before jail I didn't realize I liked it so much. For the years in jail I would daydream about being in nature, being in the mountains, being by the seaside.

Dollymount beach is a short walk from my parents' house, to get there I'd have to walk through St. Anne's park. As I walked through the park, even though it was winter there was still a lot of colour. A lot of the big tall trees in the park are evergreen trees so they still had their colour. As I walked through the park my head and eyes were darting around around taking in the landscape, walking under the tall trees, their canopy blocking out the sky. It was

an amazing feeling being hit in the face with so many different colours, different shades of green.

When I reached the beach I walked just for a little bit and then sat on a sand dune for about 2 hours looking out into the vast ocean of green, reflecting in my thoughts.

On my final night on TR, my sister and her friend brought me on a drive. We drove up to the view point in the Dublin mountains. It was pitch black when we got there. We sat in the car looking out over Dublin. It was a fantastic sight, seeing all the lights of Dublin lit up.

When I got back to jail I had six months left to do, for the final four months I was granted a TR out for a weekend each month.

After about a year into my prison experience I could not imagine ever getting out. I could not imagine not being in jail, I couldn't imagine being outside doing normal things. I felt like this right on up till I was released. But, at the same time I would daydream about stuff I could be doing.

When I was out it didn't take long for me to realize that there was only so much I could actually do. This dawned on me as I was in the welfare office queuing to sign on the dole. After queuing for a time I finally reached the hatch. I said to the man behind the hatch and told him I wanted to sign on the dole, straight away his snotty attitude came out. He gives me the paper. It takes me a while to fill out some of the questions that I can understand, some of the questions didn't make sense in my head as my mind was racing.

I handed back the paperwork. The man said to me that I didn't fill in parts of the form. I tell him I didn't know what to write in them. He started asking me the questions. Eventually he came to, "If you haven't been on the dole for five years and haven't been working, what have you been doing?" I told him I was in prison. He asked me "What was your prison number?" "I was never given one" I said, "Well if you were in prison you would have been given a prison number", I told him again I didn't get one. "You could not have been in jail for that amount of time and never given a prison number" he says smartly and matter of factly in his voice. I told him "Political prisoners aren't given a prison number." He looked at me in amazement like I had two heads. "What jail were you in?" he said with an attitude. I told him. He reached over and pulled the office phone across the table closer to him. He called Portlaoise jail and they filled him in. He put the phone down and looked at me. "Look, this is not up for debate, you would have been given a prisoner number at some point." he said very slyly. He then got the paperwork I filled in, opened it and stamped the boxes. "You can collect your payment tomorrow" he said without making eye contact.

After a few days of being out I had a deep feeling of anticlimax. It took me about a year to get used to being outside again. When out in public, especially in shopping markets, being in places that had a lot of people, my mind would race, my body would fill with anxiety. I found it hard to stand in a queue in a shop, I hated the feeling when people were standing or walking too close to me.

When in prison I could see people when they were coming down the landing or walking near me. When outside in packed places people will come from every direction going about their

business. One of the first days I was out I went into town to have a look in the shops, I was walking up Henry street, it was jammed with people. After a few minutes of walking before I could even go into a shop I had to turn back and go home.

When I got out of jail I had to get used to being outside, I was still waking up at the same time every morning. When I'd get up and after having breakfast I wouldn't know what to do with myself. A lot of the time I would go for a jog, the length of the coast road. I liked this route, when I was in jail jogging on the treadmill I would imagine I was jogging down the coast road on Sunday.

What I needed was a new routine. After two months of being out I applied for a course and got accepted onto it. The course was to last till May. Doing this course helped me a lot to adjust back into life. It gave me a routine to do each day, I got to meet new people, have normal conversations. When in jail the main conversations I had with people were mostly highly political. I got massive enjoyment from having normal conversations just about every day life. It was a breath of fresh air.

When I got out of jail it was like when I went in, I had to transition from one way living to another.

Prisons were set up to (supposedly) reform offenders. But the reality is that prisons are for the punishment and revenge by bourgeois society. If you fuck with private property they will have their vengeance. An armed robber robs a bank or a bookies and gets 10 years if caught, if they get away they will have a few thousand euros; a banker swindles and robs millions, helps to destroy a country's economy, forcing many to live in poverty, the banker gets a promotion if caught. What bourgeois society shows is that what matters when robbing property is what class you are in when doing the robbing.

The person that robs with a pen and fancy office will rob and wreak a lot more people than the person that robs by using a gun.

When a prisoner is finished their sentence they are just fucked out on the street, discarded. In a lot of cases the prisoner will have family or friends that will help them get back on their feet when they are released. But there are many prisoners who, when they are released, have no support from family or friends. These prisoners will find it way harder to get back on their feet, some of them may not ever get back on their feet at all.

#### INLA prisoners protest

In 2009, INLA<sup>4</sup> prisoners went on protest against the prison administration, because of bad treatment they were getting. A plan was put in place for their protest action. One morning when the governor came onto the landing as they regularly do, one INLA prisoner had the task of throwing the contents of a piss pot over the governor. The prisoners for the previous week had saved their piss pots and filled them with human waste and stored them in an empty cell.

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<sup>4</sup> Irish National Liberation Army

As the governor went into the screws' office on the cell the prisoner threw in the contents of the bucket, emptying it over the governor, as this happened the other prisoners threw piss pots of waist all over the place. Human waste was flowing down the stairs like a river. The governor and screws left the landing.

The riot squad was then sent in. The prisoners pulled up planks that were on a bridge that went from one side of the landing to the other. They made their escape from the riot squad by jumping down onto E3. The governor didn't want to extend the matter, bringing the E3 prisoners into the problem.

Negotiations were made between the INLA prisoners and the governor. The INLA prisoners would return to their landing if the jail stopped harassing their prisoners, the governor agreed. Also, during the protest 2 INLA prisoners were dragged off to the seg (segregation, it's basically solitary confinement), so part of the deal was to bring the 2 prisoners back from the seg, and the INLA prisoners agreed they would do their punishment in their own cells instead of in the seg.

When you are in the seg you are kept away from the rest of the prison population, you are segregated. The only people you see are screws. Occasionally you might catch a glimpse of another prisoner. You are locked in a cell 23 hours a day, you get 1 hour of exercise in a yard on your own. A prisoner can be kept in the seg for 53 days at a time.

The INLA prisoners won 3 victories here.

- 1) They stopped the harassment to themselves by the prison administration
- 2) they forced the prison administration to bring back 2 prisoners from the seg, this had never happened before, and
- 3) the jail stopped using the seg when putting republican prisoners on punishment.

The INLA prisoner protest against the prison administration proves that collective organized action against the administration can work and extra privileges can be won.

### From Republicanism to Anarchism

While in Portlaoise I didn't read half as many books on Anarchism as I did on Marxism, but the few I did read helped to shape my mind towards bringing me closer to anarchism. Before reading anything by anarchists I thought Anarchism was an individualist philosophy where no one would be accountable to anyone. My understanding of what I thought what Anarchism is was from Lenin, Trotsky, Marx, Engels and other Marxists

So when I first read writing by an anarchist I was surprised to read that there is a lot more to Anarchism than I'd previously thought. I first read an introduction to Anarchism (I think it was by Wayne Price). Contrary to what I had thought, anarchists do believe in organizing and having organizations and movements. Anarchists emphasise organizing in a non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian and democratic way.

This stuck out at me as I'd seen how other groups organize, which was a hierarchical way, tasks being fed down from above, people being given positions from above.

Republicans are like Leninists in how they organize. By this I mean they organize in the Leninist "vanguardist" way. Vanguardist Leninists set out wanting to lead people; they think the people aren't "class conscious" enough or don't understand economics, social structures, etc, enough. Leninists see themselves as being educated in all the different revolutionary theory and as being "class conscious" enough to wage struggle, and wage the struggle in the correct way, they believe they have the right answers on how to approach the struggle and what tactics to use (it's generally never up for discussion. And any talk to counter their view is shouted down.) The "vanguardist" movement or party sees itself as being the saviour of the people, they are the movement truly fit to lead the people to liberation.

Since they see themselves as having the right answers they also see themselves as the one true force to bring the people to liberation. The movement wants to be the people's voice and speak for them (because of this they actually take the people's voice from them).

From my reading and studying, what I got at this point was Republicanism was pointless without socialism. There would be no point at all in having a Republic as there would still be capitalism, exploitation and oppression. In order to get rid of this and have a truly free Ireland it would need to be a socialist society. And likewise Socialism without freedom is pointless, there is no point trying to build a socialist future if it's not the people building it themselves and the faith of society left in the hands of some "revolutionary party" or "revolutionary movement".

I thought a lot about what Ireland would look like if one of the republican groups ever got into power. What I could imagine I didn't like. A question I asked myself a few times was how can you make a government accountable (no matter how revolutionary or well intentioned the government)?

When I was released, the water charges struggle was just beginning. I attended demonstrations and protests in Edenmore and Coolock. These were held in housing estates and outside Garda stations (after people got arrested). What I noticed at these events was that it was always the politically aligned members of groups that were doing the talking. They would stand in front of the crowds speaking, preaching to the people.

This brought me back to what I was reading about the Marxists wanting to lead the people and how the Anarchists wrote about how the people don't need party leaders they can lead themselves.

The people speaking were from different groups and parties, there were Socialists and there were Republicans. What made these groups think they had the right answers? Why were they doing the speaking and why wasn't it the people at the demonstrations and protests doing the speaking instead? After all, the reason they are out on the streets affects them the most.

This got me thinking more about how groups and parties organize, and how the ones I was involved with in the past organised. I knew shady deals and decisions get made for "The

better good of the party" without the consent of the membership. It made me distrust leaderships, no one person or group of people can have the right answers all the time.

It properly clicked in my head that it's the people that have to organise themselves for their own struggles. How can a person, group or party look after your interests any better than you can yourself? From this point I am an Anarchist, and what brought me to this point influenced me to be an Anarchist.



Written by:

Joe Conlon  
30 years old

Charged with Membership of an illegal organization  
and possession of explosive substance  
(convicted for possession of explosives)

Sentenced to 6 years (4.5 years served)



# CONTACT FRONT

Kain's parents were very disappointed. It was remarkable their son had achieved an almost perfect score on his university admission test. He could have studied anything he wanted to with those grades, even medicine. Not that his parents particularly wanted him to study that. His mother was a naturopath and his father, a primary school-teacher, was also a big believer in alternative medicines. They thought the pharmaceutical companies were as greedy and heinous as the mining ones. Just as reckless as the conservative government. Or the military for that matter. Military college. They just couldn't believe it. A literal world of options and that was where their son had chosen to redeem his free pass to study anywhere. Even if hadn't scored so well on his admission test, it was just the principle of the matter.

Kain's mother blamed herself. She was the one who had pushed him into joining the Boy Scouts as a child. She had hoped it would give him an appreciation of nature and the outdoors. What he had really taken a shining to was the uniform and discipline. She'd had serious reservations about letting him move up in the world to the army cadets, but she told herself it was just harmless fun. Boys will be boys. Like the trading cards he had been so obsessed with as a child, she had hoped he would just grow out of it.

Only he hadn't. He had just signed an eight-year contract. Eight years. Eight years ago he had only been ten. How could he possibly know what he wanted to do until his mid twenties? She took some comfort in the knowledge that the first of those four years would be purely at the academy. It was the second half she was worried about. Once her son had graduated and was eligible for overseas deployment.

Kain was in the top five students in his class of eighty officer cadets when the first semester exams had come back, which came as no surprise to anyone who knew him. He had been at the upper echelons of practically everything he had ever put his mind to. The top place of the chess club in high-school, as well as vice-captain of the rugby league team, a combination that amused the other members of both groups. He had represented his school on the debate team, and nobody had ever doubted that he would end up being the dux. There were things he was terrible at, of course. He'd gotten his only 'C' in high-school for art, and he'd only gotten a grade that high for his effort and positive attitude. Kain couldn't draw to save his life, and as a child he had learned after only a few months of piano lessons that his interest in music lay solely in appreciating its beauty from a distance. But that was fine. You couldn't excel at everything.

But he did excel at everything the academy threw at him. The top marksmen in his class, and nearly breaking the record time on the obstacle course. High-distinctions in all his subjects from military history to martial law. With his grades he could have easily gotten a position in military intelligence, or any other number of safe desk jobs the army offered. But none of that interested Kain. He wanted to be a platoon commander.

Kain graduated from the college with full honours, and was promptly placed in charge of a platoon at the school of infantry. He was popular with the soldiers. He led with confidence, listened to their feedback, never patronized or pulled rank when he didn't need to, and once he'd clocked off for the day, he drank with them and made it clear they weren't to treat him as their commander when he wasn't in uniform. Once the boots were off he wasn't lieutenant Meriwether anymore. He was just Kain. Someone you could get drunk and chase after girls with. And there was no shortage of girls to be chased. Kain had many, but loved none. He wanted to focus on his career. He planned to take a wife and raise children once he'd had a few years service and a promotion under his belt.

It took the standard six months for his first platoon to finish their training. Kain had expected to be given a new squad. Most of the junior officers stayed at the school of infantry for at least a couple years. Instead he was offered a tour of duty. Fast-tracked due to outstanding service, the Colonel had said. Kain had beamed as he saluted. He'd dreamed of leading a platoon into combat since as long as he could remember.

He was even more elated to learn some of his now fully trained soldiers would be joining him on the rotation. He whelmed with pride as he got onto the transport plane. Kain did think it was ironic that the first time he was travelling overseas was to invade another country, but he had the rest of his life to travel for leisure. Here he was going to make a difference. Liberate the oppressed. Bring freedom to those who needed it most. Kain's mind could have been scanned and turned into a military recruitment video and a PR campaign at the same time. He was a believer.

Two weeks of acclimatisation at the forward operating base and a dozen briefings on local security later, Kain put on his body armour, loaded his rifle and stepped onto the armoured transport. Going outside the wire for the first time. Most of his men were nervous, but Kain wasn't. A lifetime of training had prepared him for this. He knew his rifle like the back of his hand, and he knew most of his soldiers even better. He knew what they could endure, physically and emotionally. He knew the capabilities of their weapons, and how much ammunition they carried. He knew how long it would take for resupply or additional troops to arrive if they were needed. He knew he could request air-strikes or artillery support if it came to that. He knew every conceivable military strategy. He had memorised today's game plan. He had all his bases covered.

'We're in position sir.' The driver's radio crackled into the rear transport bay where Kain was surrounded by his men. He smiled thinly at them. Nodded. There was no need for a last minute pre-battle speech to install confidence in them. They knew him. Trusted him. His presence and demeanour itself radiated confidence through each and every one of them. He went to the rear of the vehicle. The best commanders always led from the front, and Kain had always been one of the best.

The rear hatch began to open. Through the growing gap Kain saw the glaring desert sun. He saw the dry, blue sky. He caught a glimpse of the tops of sand-blasted buildings in the distance. He never saw the sniper's round.

The first shot of the battle took him in the neck, about three inches above his ballistic vest. He dropped to his knees and clutching at his wound, his body crumpled onto the deck of the carrier before the rear hatch had swung completely open. By the time it had, he was already the latest statistic in the war. It took field command almost a week to find a replacement officer to lead the platoon.



Written by:

Damien Linnane

31 years old

Sentenced to 2 years (10 months imprisoned, 14 months parole)

Hobbies: Reading and writing articles for Wikipedia.

Damien wrote a 90, 000 word novel while in prison which he is currently submitting to publishers.

# A NOTE ON "PRISON POEMS"

We struggled over the decision to include the following author's work, as we struggled to come to terms with the offence that has landed them behind bars. Making the decision to include this contribution forced us to try to grapple with the realities of the world we live in and the complexities of the issues within it. We had to face a hyper-reality we had not expected to confront.

When we started this journal, we were expecting contributions from political prisoners and prisoners who committed "crimes" that were driven primarily by the circumstances forced on them by the brutal, capitalist society we live in. We were imagining hearing from drug addicts and thieves, protesters and vigilantes. We didn't expect to hear from the man behind the gun in a famous Australian shooting. But when you open a door for voices to emerge from prison, all sorts of voices can come out. The question was: do we close that door to some voices and not others?

We absolutely understand the community condemning the actions of this man. He shot and killed 7 people. 7 people whose lives he knew nothing about, whose families had pieces of their heart cut out and thrown away by someone who made a decision to shoot randomly at passersby in a Melbourne street. This is the height of anti-social behaviour. This is far from a world we would imagine.

But this forced us to ask ourselves, as prison abolitionists, what would the fate of this man be if there were no prisons? How do we, as a community, respond to such actions? Do we silence this man's voice forever?

In all honesty, we don't know what the "right" answer is, but we felt that his writings offered something of value and do not in themselves go against any of our Terms of Publication. We do not feel it is our place to pass judgement over the inclusion or exclusion of writings based on the charges against those incarcerated, but rather based on the content of their work.

We felt it was important to comment on this no matter what our decision had been; we welcome your thoughts on the matter.

**EMAIL:**  
[runningwild@riseup.net](mailto:runningwild@riseup.net)

**POST:**  
PO Box 1989,  
Armidale, NSW 2350  
Australia

# PRISON POEMS

## THE PRISON (AS THE SUM OF ITS PARTS)

Prison,  
The name and the place,  
Is the sum of its parts.

P is for penal penitence,  
Practised in the penitentiary.

R is for remorse and regret,  
For the wrongdoing.

I is for isolation,  
From the community and from loved ones.

S is for solitary,  
Both confinement and alone with your  
thoughts.

O is for oppression,  
Of the body, the mind and the spirit.

N is for naught,  
What it was all for.

## RECEPTION

The judge's gavel fell,  
Eight years in a concrete Hell,  
Maybe only five,  
If all goes well.

Handcuffs on,  
Marched from the court,  
Stunned and silent,  
Placed in a holding cell.

The van arrives,  
Off I go,  
The van is fast,  
But my mind is slow.

A bump,  
A lurch,  
I almost fall off my perch,  
A hiss of brakes and all is still.

The door flies open,  
A guard appears,  
Beyond him a doorway beckons,  
The entrance to another world.

My clothes are taken,  
My body searched,  
A uniform is issued,  
And I become a number.

I join the line of new receptions,  
And leave behind my preconceptions,  
I am taken to a single cell,  
For this my new found Hell.

## THE MEANING OF 'LIFE'

A Life taken,  
A Life destroyed.  
In exchange,  
For a wasted Life,  
A Life thrown away.

A Life taken,  
Without proper reason,  
Devoid of any real excuse.  
An inadequate explanation,  
Offered in mitigation.

A plea is made,  
For leniency and understanding.  
But the debt is a Life taken,  
A debt that cannot be repaid,  
With regret and remorse alone.

A Life must be given,  
Must be served day by day,  
For a Life taken away.  
Other memories fade,  
While the crime remains clear.

Prison walls contain the body,  
Iron bars corral the spirit.  
Rules and regulations,  
Control daily life,  
Whilst the mind is haunted by its conscience

Redemption remains elusive,  
Parole only returns the ghost,  
Of what the offender once was.  
It does not fill the void,  
Left by the victim's absence.

## THE FREEDOM OF THE SKY

Concrete walls,  
Besser bricks,  
Iron bars,  
Wire mesh.

Wrought iron bed frames,  
Porcelain wash basins,  
Steel framed doors,  
Concrete floors.

Razor wire,  
Atop cyclone fences,  
Enclosing well trod yards,  
With concrete paths.

But all that steel and stone,  
Iron and wire,  
Cannot contain the sky.



Written by:

Julian Knight  
49 years old

Charged with Murder  
Sentenced to life imprisonment

Occupation Prior to Incarceration:  
Australian Army

# ABOUT MANOUSOS

Towards the end of 2014, I think, and after a month in Korydallos<sup>5</sup> where I stayed for a judicial case of mine, I returned back to Domokos<sup>6</sup>. Along with other news from the block, I got updated about Manousos' sudden, if not unexpected, death from a heart attack. He'd eaten, as usual, all the leftovers of the ration but this time his heart didn't bear it. Nope.

Short, fat, with Marx-like hairstyle, he spent something more than half of his 60-year-long life in prison. His third attempt to get on bail was pending. The previous two had been rejected within the past half year. He hadn't been sufficiently corrected, reckoned those in charge. He died in prison.

Alkiviades has no cellmate now and as a result he's stopped nagging about Manousos' relentless scourging on cigarettes. He hasn't been in prison for that long - two or three years only. In his fifties, badly aged, he covers his baldness using the most outdated of methods; that is, borrowing hair from the side of his head, the fringe/wig method, so to speak. His head -a problem that goes far beyond his baldness issues- is always bent to the left, as a result of some sort of musculoskeletal problem he inherited in the last years. One of his shoulders remains forever shrugged, causing his hump to look all the more asymmetric. He almost drags his left leg, half-paralyzed as it is, and the sound of his slippers, with his protruding toes unable to counteract the law of inertia, escort his heavy steps.

He has no one in life. Only his father -sick and old. He calls him whenever he has credit on his phone-card and begs him, in tears almost, not to die because he's the only one he has in life. He asks him to send him some money for tobacco and whenever the money is late, he explains to those he borrows from that his father is an old man and that he didn't manage to send the money any earlier. Then, he goes on scourging forever. I've roughly gauged that he inhales more tobacco than oxygen in a day. He drags his body from his bed to some common space of the block, sometimes to the yard shortly and back to his cell, which is now empty from Manousos.

One of his habits -repeated two or three times a day- is asking the prison officers for a Mesulid<sup>7</sup> because he's in pain and they always give him the magic pill, accompanying it by the deeply humanistic observation that pills are not candies. Invariably, he answers: "I'm in pain, you see".

Every morning, when I get out of my cell -directly after the morning's counting- to boil water at the communal stove for my coffee, Alkiviades pops up with his pot in hands well before

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<sup>5</sup> The biggest prison in Greece. It's located in the city of Piraeus, near Athens.

<sup>6</sup> A smaller prison located in a province.

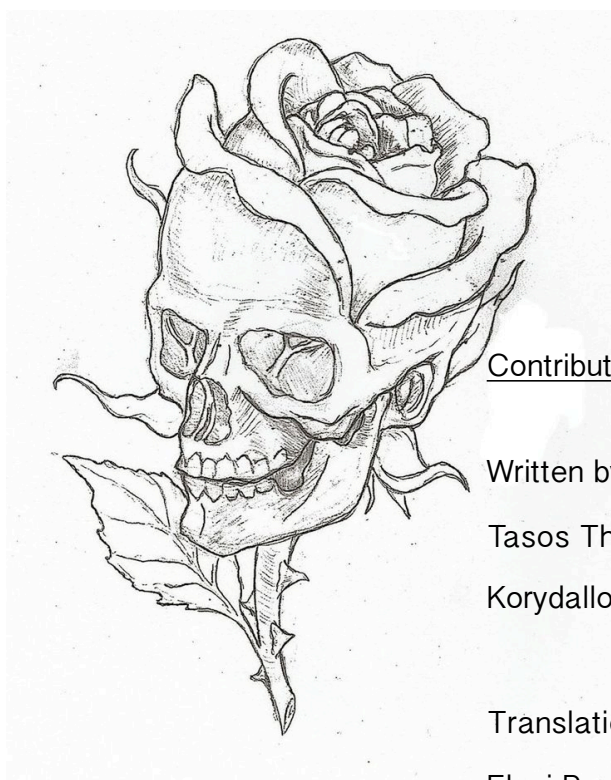
<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere known as Nimesulide. It's a strong anti-inflammatory drug that has been withdrawn in a number of countries due to high risk of adverse hepatic effects.

anyone else. He fills it up with something between tea or diluted milk, depending on the day. The milk-water is left at the ration at the crack of dawn.

Crabby as I normally am before my morning coffee, I usually spare my “good mornings” and I sometimes get angry at him when he draws too close to ask for a cigarette, whispering in my ear as if it was a national secret.

One day, following the very same routine, waiting for my water to boil, I noticed that Alkiviades didn't show up. Almost relieved to have avoided this morning encounter, I restricted myself to only noting his absence somewhere deep inside my head. A little later I found out that his absence was not without excuse- he had died alone in his cell the night before. I also found out that he'd been complaining to our good prison service for his pain. The prison has no doctor, big deal to drag you to the hospital- you know how the story goes. This is no sanatorium dude, it's prison. That was it. He died.

I have no idea who informed his father. What I know is that the cell remained completely empty for plenty of the following weeks.



Contribution details:

Written by:

Tasos Theofilou

Korydallos prison, Greece

Translation:

Eleni Pappa, in solidarity.

Reunion Island



# THE REVEALING AND TRAGIC STORY OF TASOS THEOFILOU

From all the stories comprised in the patchwork of the so-called “New Terrorism” found in the Greek public sphere, Tasos Theofilou’s story is by far the most revealing and tragic. It’s revealing because it lucidly depicts the distance between facts and what the police, the jurisdiction, the mainstream media and “self-restrained” journalism methodically launched in public speech as “terrorist threat”. It’s tragic because a young man is in prison without the slightest proof.

In 2014, Tasos Theofilou was trialed at the court of first instance and was convicted to 25 years imprisonment for the charges of simple complicity in homicide and armed robbery of Alpha Bank on the island of Paros in 2012. The court had, back then, acquitted him of joint constitution of and participation in the Revolutionary Organization “Conspiracy of the cells of fire” [R.O. CCF] as well as of all charges related to possession of explosives and war material. Nevertheless, he’s brought to trial at the court of appeal for the very same charges again, since the Public Prosecution Service has lodged an appeal [against the initial decision].

Of the 19 witnesses who were called to testify, some were eyewitnesses to the robbery and Counter-terrorism Service executives. However, none of them identified the accused Tasos Theofilou. According to the allegations of the Counter-terrorism Service, an unknown individual called them and told them that someone named “Tasos” participated in the robbery and went on to share Theofilou’s home address in the city of Thessaloniki. The reason why the phone number of the caller was not recorded, rendering the identification of this individual impossible, was that –as they stated at court- the Counter-terrorism Service have no calling-line identification system! In any case, they managed to identify Tasos Theofilou’s location a few days later and arrested him while he was sitting at the stairway of Keramikos metro station, carrying a bag with a “Paros” print. Also, the Counter-terrorism Service commissioner himself- when asked during the hearing- answered that he was not in position to identify Theofilou, since the facial features [of the robber] were covered. Moreover, a Counter-terrorism Service executive had to state: “Perhaps it’s not him, I can’t know for a fact if it’s really him. Perhaps this man was not at the robbery”, thus practically acquitting the accused.

Tasos Theofilou was convicted based on a single piece of evidence, which was a DNA sample found on a hat- a hat, however, which was presented at a later stage, which did not appear in the photos of the evidence taken at the crime scene, which was not included in the list among the rest of the confiscated findings. At the same time, one of the witnesses pinpointed various differences between the hat presented at court and the one the robber seemed to be wearing during the robbery. Moreover, two other witnesses, who were called to testify in their scientific/professional capacity, decidedly stated that detection of DNA on a portable object does not mean that the person who the DNA belongs to has necessarily

come to physical contact with the object itself- a fact that was later reinforced by the presiding judge's statement: "Understood, Theofilou might have not ever worn this hat".

Meanwhile, since his arrest and throughout his presence in the media until today, Tasos Theofilou's image has been accompanied by the whine "Terrorist-terrorist-terrorist" following him in every step. From his choreographically directed commission to the court -which featured in hysteric TV news bulletins- to articles written by well-established and prudent centrist columnists, the manipulation formula used in Theofilou's case was reliable and tested: the media spent days profiling him as a bloodthirsty terrorist and even used excerpts from his fiction works – T. Theofilou happens to be a very talented writer- in an attempt to document his murderous character.

Of course, even a basic understanding of the concept of rule of law leads to certain grounded expectations: when a prosecutor, on the one hand, – in this case, the Counter-terrorism Service- admits at court that they're doubtful about the accused's guilt and a judge, on the other, admits that it's doubtful whether there's any connection between the accused and the one and only piece of evidence, then the accused is expected be acquitted. Hence, it's impossible to puzzle out a case as such without taking the construction of "New Terrorism" into account: The Counter-terrorism Service has based Tasos Theofilou's connection with the R.O. CCF on his political convictions – he's an anarchist- as well as his friendship with other anarchists, who have been linked to the same organization by, yet again, the Counter-terrorism Service. Apparently, never did they manage to prove this connection. In similar "terrorism" cases- in which the accusations of "participation in terrorist organization" were never proved- the authorities had submitted evidence of the accused individuals' involvement in offences of different nature or had arrested them in the act; contrariwise, in Tasos Theofilou's case no one has presented anything at all that would justify his conviction for any of the charges. So, here we become witnesses to an extraordinary "achievement": while the common practice of the Counter-terrorism Service is to arbitrarily link someone's involvement in a "common" offence – say, robbery or illegal possession of arms- with "terrorism", in this case an arbitrary connection to "terrorism" has led to an arbitrary connection to a "common" offence; and the whole scenario is based on evidence that can prove the accused's relation to neither "terrorism" nor the common offence.

Reinforcing the standpoint he's endorsed since his initial conviction, Tasos Theofilou states in his open letter: "I see my legal battle against all charges at the court of appeal as part of a wider battle against a ruthless police state, against judicial repression and its extremist doctrines. It is a bizarre existential battle in which adjudicators and prosecutors are parts of a single body- this of jurisdiction. As I did at the court of first instance, I would like to highlight yet again that I don't pledge innocent and I will not plead with any judge to believe me. I am not innocent. In the class war, I've chosen a side. I stand with the underprivileged and the suppressed, the marginalized and prosecuted, the sinners and the accursed. I decided to take political action in the anarchist movement with the admittedly ambitious goal to strike the social, political and economic foundations of capitalism and its state. However, I denied, I deny and will deny again all accusations of the actions they've charged me with. I never was a member of CCF, I didn't participate in this robbery and, above all, I never killed

and wouldn't have been ever capable of killing an unarmed citizen for any reason and under any circumstances".

The Greek police and jurisdiction have long joined the governmental authorities and the media in the construction of "New Terrorism", namely the intensification of a sense of public fear of a threat, which is, in reality, completely disproportionate to the actual impact of the action taken by organizations as such. The over-criminalization of "terrorism" – that is, an unrefined political procedure which seeks to refute the political nature of such offences exactly because it aims at its political manipulation- is a phenomenon that spans a number of remits: the legal, the governmental/administrative, the judicial and chiefly that of public speech. It's one of the most hideous phenomena in the era of post-democracy; one that blatantly undermines the notion of citizenship as envisaged in liberal democracy by substituting proactivity with modern-age "insecurity".

The case of Tasos Theofilou (a man who, based on the presented evidence, should not only be acquitted of some of the charges -those that the authorities are yet again and revengefully bringing him to court for- but instead be freed with the apologies of the organized society) reveals the intensity of this phenomenon to the extent that the basic functioning of the existing rule of law is deemed unnecessary so that the "threat" will unwaveringly regulate the political life and public sphere.



# WHY PAPER CHAINED?

We want to explain a little where this journal came from, why it is here, and what our hopes are for it.

To start at the very beginning, someone at Running Wild experienced a family member going behind bars and was inspired to create this journal after reading the poetic and soulful letters and poems sent home from behind those walls.

The name of the journal, “Paper Chained”, was chosen because we feel it evokes a lot of different ideas and sentiments. Paper Chained - because people in prison in Australia cannot even have books sent to them and all of the letters they send or receive are read by strangers in uniforms who are paid to keep people locked up. Something precious about sending a message in a sealed envelope to a loved one is totally destroyed when you know it will be read by others; these writings themselves become locked up in the world of prison, and other writings are locked out of it. We liked the contrast of “paper” and “chained”, something so fragile held by something so strong. What is “holding” the paper is not just the prison walls themselves, though, or even the broader system and administration of prisons, but our society as a whole. There is a lot of silence around prison. Families don’t want others to know their loved one is in prison, prisoners who are inside have little way of communicating with the general public, once they’re out they often don’t want to talk about their experiences when it’s behind them, and ex-prisoners forever have this history hanging over them - an inescapable mark on a record. Employers will ask about it, insurance companies will ask about it, if you want to donate blood, even then you will be asked about it.

This journal, we hope, is a way to loosen the chains around these writings and expressions, to create a space that interrupts the silence and the stigma. We hope that it might help to undo some of the dehumanising of individuals that can come with a prison sentence. We hope that it might shine a light on the atrocities of our “justice” system and the prison system. And we hope, for those of us who are prison abolitionists, that it might wake us up to what prisons mean, what life without prison could mean, and the questions, conversations and actions we need to pursue to understand and build alternatives.

Finally, we liked the name “Paper Chained” because of the play on “paper chains” - something that shows connectedness, and community,

