

# **Book Launch: A Normal Life by Vassilis Palaikostas**

Vassilis Palaikostas

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A NORMAL LIFE

£15.00

by Vassilis Palaiokostas

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*A Normal Life* is the autobiography of Vassilis Palaiokostas, known to the public as the “Greek Robin Hood,” to police as “The Uncatchable.” His is an illegalist existence lived in defiance of the police and of the state, and for decades, it has been a life lived as a fugitive.

In Greece he has become a household name, a modern folk hero of sorts, taking millions in bank raids — including the famous Kalambaka heist, Greece’s biggest ever — and ransoming CEOs whilst distributing his gains to those who needed it. But he is most famous for his prison breakouts — infamously escaping the high-security wing of Korydallos Prison by helicopter.

Twice.

Vassilis Palaiokostas is hated by the authorities, deemed a terrorist, his freedom a continued insult to the Greek State. Now his memoir, an instant bestseller in Greece, has been translated to English for the first time so he can tell his story in his own words. He does not offer any mealy-mouthed, “socially acceptable” justifications for his actions, but honestly elaborates his dreams and their totality.

*A Normal Life* is a gripping account of life on the run and in jail, of car chases, daring escapades and the camaraderie of the bandit. It is also the story of his motivations.

# Features & Extracts

## **The Uncatchable** (BBC Long Read):

“The 1980s flew by in a blur of bank raids and capers, with Vassilis distributing the proceeds to anyone who sheltered him ... Massive inflation in Greece saw the price of a beer quadruple between 1985 and 1992. The public grew more distrustful of government, and critical of corruption inside the state-run banks. This swelled the numbers of those prepared to cheer on the roguish Paleokostas brothers. An era of cat and mouse between the cops and the robbers began.”

### **The kidnap of Alexander Haitoglou:**

“It was Vassilis’ view of treating even the worst of people with humanity which gave Haitoglou his sense of security. It didn’t take long for the magnate to assess the situation and realise he would be treated with a respect that, frankly, he did not afford others in his role as financier and friend to the reactionaries of Political Spring ... When they dropped him off, Vassilis remembers, Haitoglou left them with a joke: ‘Guys, if only it didn’t cost that much, I’d very much like to have another adventure with you!’”

# Reviews

## **Organise:**

“It’s hard to ignore how romantic much of this is, his illegalist exploits make me smile, an underdog facing an insurmountable enemy, who takes them on and ultimately wins? Fuck yes. I am gripped by the accounts as much as any blockbuster movie ... Vassilis fills the the role of the fearless fighter, a criminal sure, but he’s sticking it to the bastards who commit crimes a thousand times worse. His prey are the heartless bankers and corrupt capitalists. After all what kind of bank robber gives the loot to the poor?”

## **The Offline Post:**

“Throughout his intellectual endeavour one can discern a duality in the character of (Vassilis’) writing. On the one hand his short, direct and everyday writing style narrates events in a fast flow, pushing the reader to constantly turn more pages. At the same time, however, the whole text is governed by an impetuous romanticism that challenges a socio-political model suffering from corruption — crystallised forms of which the author encounters in both the penitentiary and the judicial system of justice — producing inequalities of justice across the social, economic and political spectrum ...

“Palaiokostas leaves to the reader’s judgment both the truth of what he says and the genuine definition of concepts such as ethics, justice, violence, and law, which makes his book timeless and worthy reading. In a society where the concept of democracy is constantly being reconstructed, enclosing different nuances depending on how it is read, perhaps the speech of a former prisoner deserves attention, for the sake of balance in this reading.”

## **Impressions:**

“We need to pass on the peoples’ perspectives of inspiration and insurrection, Robin Hood and Boudicca, mischief and mythology, Loki and Eris, our own cautionary odysseys, fishing tales of *oh-my-god-I-can’t-believe-we’re-doing-it*, Icarus’ blaze of glory rather than Orpheus’ glance back as he weakened at the last. We need our own epics of the weak growing strong, the impossible made manifest, the spark that would become an inferno.”

# Recommendations

The story of the Palaiokostas brothers is one of struggle against an increasingly totalitarian world of laws and extreme social inequalities. They present an inspiring contradiction to the dominant narrative of our times, of consolidating State power and the invincibility of capitalism. Published with its author still on the run, this book itself is an act of resistance, and an affirmation of life and freedom.

Peter Gelderloos, author, *How Nonviolence Protects The State*

Property and prison — a snug fit, built on violence — got blown apart when the goat shepherds went hi-tech. Vassilis, his bother and ‘The Artist’, helicopters and all, pay no respect to its walls and keep the reader, as well as the cops, on our toes.

John Barker, author, *Bending The Bars*

# Launch talk

Listen here.

**Speaker 1:** Welcome to the book launch of a normal life, which is freedom's latest publication. It's the autobiography of Vasilis Polly Costas who is infamous in Greece for robbing a bunch of banks and taking people hostage himself off. He's probably the most successful bank robber in Greece. And we're here, we're publishing his autobiography. And ideally when you publish the autobiography of somebody, you would. Have them there. To talk about their life and introduce themselves and talk about the writing of the book. But fortunately and unfortunately, so unfortunately, he's not here, and he can't be here, because fortunately he escaped from prison in 2009, and he's free and on the run and has not been captured, which is a good thing, and we're sure we all wish him well. Wherever he is. He does present some logistical problems, Sir, however. It's very unlikely that. We could get him to turn up. Doing a book. And we definitely won't be sharing on Facebook lives if we did. So what we have decided to do is after press, we're going to talk about the book. We're going to give a little introduction to facilities life and his story, and we're going to talk about why we're publishing the book and the kinds of process we'd we'd like took on. And bringing it about so and we're going to be. These are two people who are on camera going to be. Doing the interview question. Yeah, you can better get ready for these questions.

**Speaker 2:** That's a bad question.

**Speaker 1:** So my first question is for those who don't know who facility is and what he. Did you give a little? Background about his life and the. Context in which he was.

**Speaker 3:** So the service PALEOKASTRITSA is certainly the most famous and one of the most successful bank robbers. Ingroups kind of falls into it's a category that's named by the person who. Does the four work? For the book Polycarp prostitute Dallas, I'm going to mangle some names. I do apologize for that. He kind of describes the concept of the social bandit in Greek literature and in Greek couple of culture as. Sort of like. The Rock Robin overall, but with a great with a form of anticolonialism. As well, because Greece obviously was. Ruled by the Ottoman Empire until it vanished. Independence in the 1822 I think. But in that long period, one of the key groups of groupings of the people we fought back against the Ottoman Empire were the output of the bandits who used to, essentially act as highwaymen, sort of robbing the. The Turkish troops and merchants and whatnot as they went, went past, and they were kind of considered as figures of the resistance essentially. So you have for example Antonis Cat Sentinus in 1777 to 18 oh. Eight who he kind of. Mixed robbing the Ottomans and giving the. Money back to peasantry with. Essentially fighting as a rebel in the mountains. A lot of these people did come from the mountains, sort of cohousing communities villages. All this kind of stuff and vastly kind of leans very heavily into this as a. Kind of background because he himself was born in. 1968 And was the son of the goat herder in the mountains just. Pindus mountain range just to the West of. He grew up in a very, very poor family with, I think, five siblings and one of those siblings was Newpos, who was his Big Brother, older than him by 7 years. I think they basically got into robbing as they both got into the kind of the form of the of the crime that did was initially very, very kind. Of you. Know moving radios out of cars, that kind of stuff until Nikos was jail. And in fact, the first story in the book. Is called Vasilis. Then very early 20s, breaking his brother out of. Prison via the. Quite low tech. Method of throwing a weighted rope over the. Over the wall. It's kind of like something out of Warner Brothers Club, so and his brother, just like nipping over the wall again. His brother was recalled. And then he weighed another man cross. Thus the artists Samarth, they all have amazing nicknames instead. Thus this known by three separate nicknames, which is the uncatchable the Greek one in herds and

St. Basil and St. Basil in Orthodox Greek religion is essentially Santa. His brother was known as the Phantom and Costas was the artist so. The uncatchable and the artist attempted to break break the Phantom out again by ramming a truck through the wall of the prison. This did not go down well and they got caught, but basically the this started a long series of robberies. Which cost has kind of acted as trainer for the. Sellers, but the sellers kind of had a much more left wing sort of libertarian bent, not sort of formal anarchist he. Was a big fan, for example of the 17 November Movement, which is a Marxist Leninist, sort of. Revolutionary outfit from the time, but he was sort of very much into kind of his politics as well and equalism and all this kind of stuff they quickly wrapped up their activities and the first really big event was in callback out, which was at still is in fact the biggest. Bank robbery in Greek history. Which was which they did 500 yards away from the local. Cops, as you might imagine, the both the scale and the humiliation did not endear him to the police at the time, and he swiftly became one of the most possibly the most wanted man in Greece. This was only worsened when he started pioneering. Again, he and his brother started pioneering the arsenal of ransoming CEO S. And there's, there's a. There's a wonderful section of his book in which he kind of goes through the process in which he started selecting. We wanted to wanted to. Dancer and he started going through people and saying, well, there's not quite enough of a \*\*\*\*\* or Oh well, he's he's. You know better he's he's nice issues to his to his workers and then eventually like something like that and height blue is a he's he's a supporter of. One of the at the very far right organization which was to deal with kind of Macedonian border stuff and that kidnap is essentially what turns. Vassilis into full on household name in Greece for fallout from that saw him, then spend years in the. World until he was. Eventually caught due to car crash. He then goes through 2 stints in prison. Further, he escaped by helicopter from Port Dallas Prison and the second time he escaped by helicopter. That was pretty. You might think that the. Prison guards were a bit more wary at. The same time, but as it turns out.

**Speaker 4:** Present still.

**Speaker 3:** Oh yeah, yeah, it's the biggest present in Greece.

**Speaker 2:** Has anyone else tried to escape by Doctor so?

**Speaker 3:** They're happy other person helicopter escapes, since most notably from a French prison, which is essentially a carbon copy of. But he is, as far as I know, the person to his state from prison. Twice by helicopter, and he had essentially been on the run ever since. Obviously the second of these helicopters case. Not only making the household they increase rates are very strange across Europe, it led directly. It is thought to the Greek state attempting to fit him up essentially by blaming. So there was some. Greece is a frequent target, falls in the process of doing research for. A pamphlet which is we're we're we're working on alongside the book, which we can talk about. Then later I was kind of reading up about like the 22, 2008 2009 period. There's things happening like every month because it's a very large legalist and kind of. Whatever you want to call it. Yeah, thank you mindset. One of these bonds was a was an was a post post just a batch which was sent to 1 to a Greek minister. It didn't get to the green rooster and instead blew up whilst the postal worker had it playing both both his hands. And the Greek states because he tried to pin the blame on the service by saying, well, we found a piece of 1 case and this largely considered Hoboken in as much as it doesn't fit any of the services MO like he's he very proudly writes in the book. He has never taken a life in the. Course of a 20 year career of robbing banks and ransoming people. He also doesn't really have any. Background in sending bombs or bombing things in particular. And obviously the final one being that if you explode a bomb, it's quite rare that you find very much in the bomb leftover, so.

**Speaker 2:** With a fully formed fingerprint.

**Speaker 3:** You are fully formed and fully. So broadly it's considered that this essentially the state finding a reason to go after him for themselves and they. Really have as much as. They put €1 million bounty on them, which was at the time the largest bounty in Europe. You were sort of, top. Of the Interpol lists. And nevertheless, he's never been caught, so he's still on. The left There's those rumours with after his escape with him, Robbie Warbucks and they're disappearing. But yeah, he's he's still a



free mand write his autobiography from whichever place he's got. So that was only a potting potting. History of brief run through.

**Speaker 2:** I think what's what's significant. About the book. Is that a lot of these stories are known by Greek people and by people outside who have an interest in, Renegades and the like, and that. Is his account. Of it, and I think that's what. That's what brings it so much of its charm is like you can read these stories on any Wikipedia.

**UNKNOWN:** Page but to.

**Speaker 2:** Hear his he. It's a very like particular way of. Talking about himself and the. People he meets and it is. Almost whimsical at times like his complete. Comfort in his way of life. Which is so . Like external to the way in which the rest of us live. And yet it's absolutely his norm. And it yeah, I think the thing that is special about the book is that hearing it in his own words like these. These things and. Just like you would never expect to read. A book where. You get sick. Of car. Chases, but there are so many cards. And it's it to him. It really is like an average. Thursday is a car chase and yeah, like you. Know the stories are like oh that's funny. That's funny, that's funny. But this actually was his life. And yeah, I don't. Know I, I think that's really.

**Speaker 1:** OK, so this a bit of the context of the book. I just wanted to ask you, it's not really. The book is really fitting in with freedoms kind of back catalogue. You know freedoms done. A lot of anarchist theories and historical anarchist texts and history books. And it hasn't really gone into the rip roaring thriller thrill seeking karchere. This kind of thing and also you pointed out in the context, but. Still, it isn't. Anarchist, at least not the declared 1. So I wondered what was the thinking about? Why did you think it's important to bring? This new addition to. To the new. Translation to this audience and bring it to the UK in a in a much more kind of formal. Way than what it's? Been done before.

**Speaker 2:** I mean, I wouldn't say it was outside of food and we meant to write histories of famous men. That is something we are. All too prudent to do, but on a more serious yeah.

**Speaker 3:** So with the original read through of the normal life like I came away very. Very mixed views on the man himself, in as much as I think that like friend of mine who helped with the section of something that copiers in the book sort of talked about in. In saying that, if you if you've met a Greek anarchist in his sort of 40s or 50s, then the tone that person News news is very familiar. Like there's a certain, as you say, there's a certain way in which he likes and kind of thinks in this kind of semi romantic way in about about things. But there's. There's something comes through on the book, which I think it does fit very strongly into our general mode of operation. I suppose like it's not just someone who robs banks like he's very famous. The reason he's called the green Robin St. Basil and this kind of stuff is that famously he would do stuff like he would rob a bank. Pouncing away in the getaway vehicle and he'd stop to give a homeless guy like just. On board your track. Halfway through the escape, there's also very there's very sort of. His his description of the Greek justice system as well is in and of itself I think worth publishing the book. You know there's a lot of. There, there are prison prison Diaries and people who write about kind of justice systems. All this kind of stuff, but there's nothing quite so visceral as someone who is completely unrepentant. Still on the run, so he's got absolutely nothing to hide in terms of, he doesn't care about look, he's if he gets caught, he's. Down for 150. It's like if you get you. Know there's that's the end of inquiry. So he says that he writes about the reach, the justice system and corruption within it and his experience in prison and all the rest of it, with just total frankness like and. And he is, he hates these people like seriously.

**Speaker 2:** But not only does he hate them like he.

**Speaker 4:** Doesn't describe himself.

**Speaker 2:** As anarchist, but his critique of. The institutions he. He has analysis and his analysis absolutely in line with ours of freedom. Press like whether. Or not, he's in the same word. As us doesn't really matter. Like he understands the ways in which like the machinations, are power, actually function like the ways in which the lefties on the street. Bailiffs and the ground cops, and. Then the the higher. Up as the businessmen and the judges and the. You know the. What they call the people who work in prisons. Prison offices like how they all fit. Screws how they how? They all fit into this system like and.

His his his systemic analysis. Of power and also ought to be free. I think is one that is absolutely in line with freedom values. I think that's why it was important for us to publish. It's not just a sexy. Story it's a sexy story with a moral framework that does align with.

**Speaker 3:** Our own, yeah, I mean. I mean, it's like as with any book, there's, there's a lot of stuff which I sort of read about. In the book, that sort of says, which I don't necessarily agree with, like some of his viewpoints and things that I that I don't personally agree. With at all. But the book itself is describing a form of total refusal to follow the. The status quo, the guidelines, the rules which have been kind of put forward by people in power to stay in power, which. I have great deals.

**UNKNOWN:** I was thinking.

**Speaker 2:** About this the other day when I was thinking about. Like whether or not I like. And I was thinking that. If I was watching a film about him, I would absolutely be in love with him. But if I was having to politically organize with him, I would find him absolute. Pain the \*\*\*\*. And I think that kind of. Sums up myself. It's like he's. An incredibly charming and charismatic and fluent and self confident and arrogant. And all of these things, and I think yeah, he. Is a ? Not an even a. Contradiction would be very true, but.

**Speaker 4:** Give me the.

**Speaker 1:** Character there has been an English translation before this of this text, but freedom to a lot of work over the. Past few months. To bring a new version of the text out. And I know from personal experience I've been being a copy editor on the book and New Two also having been very involved in producing the book. So how was the test before you received it, and what was involved in? Bringing it to its current state.

**Speaker 2:** OK look, it was an incredibly impressive translation of a book that is 400 almost 4. 100 How many pages long \*\*\*\*\* load of pages?

**Speaker 3:** Long version somewhat somewhat yes, but the original translation came out about.

**Speaker 2:** Even imagine what it would be like to try and translated this from Greek to English, and it's absolutely 1000% respect to the translator of the text, however. There is OK so.

**Speaker 4:** Why is that? Yeah.

**Speaker 2:** I mean, the translation is \*\*\*\*\* hard.

**Speaker 1:** OK.

**Speaker 2:** And it's a long book, but I will say that some things get lost in translation and like a very very good translation is not the same thing as a book that is a comfortable read for a native English speaker, which is, unfortunately or fortunately the private. Audience that we are reaching out to. And so the book. Has been previously very successful in its English language. Translation in Greek, and it could have.

**Speaker 4:** You know we.

**Speaker 2:** Could have reproduced that, but we thought that since we had the agency to do so and we thought we had the time and capacity to do so, whether not that one not true, we would. We would try to make. It as readable as possible because. One of the things is that, like Greece, I mean I don't speak Greek and this all as I. Understand it, it has a. Very different kind of syntax to English. A lot of the. Metaphors are absolutely incomprehensible. If they come with a direct translation to give you example of one of my favorite metaphors that he said that I could. Not find a way of translate. Thing is. It doesn't matter if you eat canned tuna or smoked Turkey. If you don't have. Big balls, someone else will sew. Sometimes we had to work with things that were, I'm sure accurately translated directly, but metaphor and similarly of which versus users. A whole bunch were just incredibly difficult, and so yeah, we we all worked. I think this. The project in which every member. Of the Freedom Press publishing team has been. The most involved. Like everyone was in it, we outsourced to help do our comrades. Who generously would. Copy edit paragraphs. There's also just differences in kind of grammatical styles like Decillis or his translator uses a lot of ellipses and exclamation marks, whereas we are more speed. And so we use more full stops and cut ends for sentence. And so yeah, I think very difficult project. I think it will be very difficult project the original translation to turn something that. Is also in someone's

own words. And that's The thing is, we didn't want to lose the sense of our silence and the way he speaks and the way in which he describes his own actions whilst trying to make it as comprehensible as possible to a native English speaker or other people in which. English English is the second language.

**Speaker 3:** There's also. Obviously, one of the things which you get when you do any. Any biography in one culture or another? There's all kinds of historical references and esophageal references. Political references, which absolutely obvious to a Greek, but to an English person not at all. So there's one character, for example. Antinos, who is sort of mention. And copiously in one section of the book he's by the Zillas. Who is? He was a very senior prison officer and head of the prison Officers Union, and the service goes into quite some depth about this guy. You know, being being quite just a real \*\*\*\*\* \*\* \*\*\*. *And it only comes into focus, exactly why why his description is so extensive when you kind of read about our antinos through the Greek through the Greek press, which and his massive level of influence like everyone seen. And at one point he was accused of corruption by Greek by the Greek Justice Minister and the Greek Justice Minister. This was how powerful this man was, and he's only very recently been busting my property busted because he was throwing prostitute fueled \*\*\* parties.* In the. And was caught out doing that. He's now been busted down to amazingly be the be a prison officer prison guard in the women's wing of the prison. So yeah. So he's got all these descriptions of the of kind of ministers who used to be part of the great resistance. For example. And various kind of historic events. Thing is, he does references to Greek Orthodox religion a fair bit and then you have to be, like I said, why is this? What is this reference mean? What is what is the content so there's no, there was an awful lot of like there's copious footnoting throughout the book which were doing sort of saying. OK, what does he mean here? Why is this an important? Place or thing or person.

**Speaker 2:** Also, one of the things I found was. Like there's a lot of specialist knowledge. That really demonstrates his own interest like. For example, to. Him he will. Mention in detail every single different type of gun he uses, but to him every single big car is an SUV. As someone. There's very, very little about the different types of guns It did cause me pause at some. Point like when. He said I had a Browning hidden in my trousers. Something very different to me than it transpired. It meant with us. And so there were lost in translation. Moments, even in terms of just. His, his expertise and his interest compared to mine. I know nothing about cars. And I know very little about guns so. It was also a learning curve.

**Speaker 1:** Critique of this book, possibly. A bit of a kind of a bloke. Like a men's adventure novel in some ways and that It's. It's people robbing. Things with guns and cars and car chases and having read a good report in the book like Women Don't really. You know, featuring the book all that much. What what do you? What do you think about this and do you think this just the life he was living or how he would relating it like how can we? Like how do we account for that?

**Speaker 2:** Oh, do I? Get to do this one. How do we pronounce that? I mean, there's two different ways of going into that question, right on the other, one hand, if there was a book written by a woman where it was old, car chases, and. This and this and this. Would you say it's a women's adventure book.

**Speaker 1:** This a dialogue.

**Speaker 2:** Question to the. Question is but the other way of looking at it. Is yeah it could, it could. I mean it could. The problem is we don't know, right? Because we only have his word for it. It could say something about. His priorities, like he didn't. Bother writing about. Important female relationships in his. Life or if you see he's leaving. Going to talk about women.

**Speaker 4:** Shameful or I could say something about the fact that he doesn't want women environment because he don't.

**Speaker 2:** Was mentioned women and he mentioned women in the way that. Sweet old men in pubs. I should probably have better analysis about talk about women, which is that she's a lovely flower, delicate lady, super beautiful and I have ultimate respect for. Her, as is almost foreign, incomprehensible being. And this the thing and this. Is not I mean? For women, it's yeah. It's kind of almost charming because I don't have to be in. The same environment as. Him as I was saying earlier about he'd. Be

great on a film not great in freedom. Like every every female journalist or judge or whoever he comes across is madly in love with him. Within the first conversation, according to. Him, when he has.

**Speaker 1:** His he has.

**Speaker 2:** This very, very long anecdote about his road trip across China, which is actually incredibly interesting. If you want to look at China just after it first opened. Up, it's a really interesting story. But every Chinese woman is like shy and beautiful and offers him rice.

**Speaker 5:** And .

**Speaker 2:** You know, at the end of the day it's a guy . In his like. Old age late middle age. Writing an idealized version of his own of his own life, and so, like I think we can take from that, that either he didn't have many women. Around him. Or he didn't think they were taking what to talk about, or he just thought women were these beautifully. Incomprehensible creatures that were probably all in.

**Speaker 4:** Love with him.

**Speaker 2:** But I don't think that attracts on the books because at the end it's a memoir. It's not a political tract, if it was meant to be Vasilis. On feminism, then yeah, I might have a feature about why you're publishing it.

**Speaker 3:** There is the fundamental as well. I think that he spent most of his professional career. If you like working with guys to rob banks and then going to prison where he was in prison with. There is that element of his life. He's just being very male centric.

**Speaker 4:** But he does talk very.

**Speaker 2:** Positively about women at.

**Speaker 3:** Different yes he does and I was actually gonna bring up one particular. So the 2nd of his escapes through by the 2nd his helicopter escapes. The main person who made it happen was well was allegedly well it. Wasn't allegedly that it. Was one, but the person who was in prison denies that they were. But basically, yeah, like it, it was, it was. A woman who. Got an helicopter? Got gun to the head with the pilot flew. Flew over to the to the prison. Dropped the dropped the rope ladder. Got them all up. Got them out again and there was a there. Was a planning. Because it's obviously because they needed to know it when it was happening and what was going to be going on. All this kind of stuff, and in the course of the book he kind of mentioned a. A discussion a stolen phone that he has with the with this woman. And there's this tone. Kind of semIncredulity, I suppose, because he's he's. He's sort of. He's very impressed by it. But it's just like it's clearly. The first time. That he's worked directly with a woman to. Commit crime essentially.

**Speaker 2:** But I will also say that in the translation of that section he had left farm wise formation marks in the women's part of the conversation in the men which I. Ruthlessly cut out because I don't. Think women always talk like this.

**Speaker 4:** But the actually the case, the thing. I was thinking of was.

**Speaker 2:** The one where he saw the bunch of women bringing the food to the prison and they had just decided autonomously that they were all gonna bring them really lovely delicious meals and they were having this conversation with the prison officers who. Were quite amused. All these women were like. No, we bring them nice food everyday. And so you. Know like he's always very respectful. Towards women, but it's always more awe at whoa, look at this incredible thing that's happening that I don't understand than it is. Women are my comrades who I work with, and that's kind of normal. But again, it was.

**Speaker 1:** He was the 80s.

**Speaker 2:** That was the ages.

**Speaker 1:** So like I said at the start, we can't have facility here. Because he's on the run. And that's very good, and we're. Very happy for him. Well, I hope he doesn't never go. Back to prison but.

**Speaker 3:** Because here so excited though his brother. He is now helped.

**Speaker 1:** Yes, and his Nikos, who he committed lots of crime with, has been released on compassionate grounds. I believe, so that is very good and very happy.

**Speaker 2:** Very good.

**Speaker 1:** So, but we can kind of hear from him directly, and this a kind of a little sample of the book. If you buy it and you will be able to buy it at the end of the session, you haven't already and. You should, if you haven't so Rowan is going to read an extract.

**UNKNOWN:** They always do that.

**Speaker 1:** OK, hold the plan.

**Speaker 2:** I know, but now I feel shy because it's quite. I don't know, do you?

**Speaker 4:** Want to hear an extract?

**Speaker 2:** See, nobody was doing extract.

**Speaker 1:** Yeah, yeah, I think you.

**UNKNOWN:** Yeah, of course.

**Speaker 1:** Definitely do it.

**Speaker 2:** OK well. OK fine. I'm not very. Good at public speaking though. I talk like 50% of the speed of everyone else. 100 and.

**Speaker 1:** 50% of the time.

**Speaker 2:** I picked this extract because I think it fully summarizes. The way vasila. Sees himself and sees his role and sees his philosophy, but also the way in which he treats. He talks to other people, so the extra starts with this young lad. Who so he's? In prison. And he gets. His knock on his on his door and this young lad. Is there with a platter full? I'm just paraphrasing the first part. Don't worry. I'm not paraphrasing the whole. Thing and anyway the young lad says that. He his uncle. Knows knows Vassilis and he wants to meet him. And so he asks the like. Young lad what? You in here for, and he's in here for drugs, in prison for doing drugs, for buying, and. And so he says, he's heard of the guy, the young lady's uncle. And he wanted to get to know the point. So he starts talking about the boy here and he says Firos was unable to distinguish. After all, the systems deliberately don't between a criminal and an outlaw between a lawless mand an autonomous man between someone and your authoritariand someone authoritarian to him. All these were gained in. A vast dangerous. Amusement park for adults where everyone was free. Throw their luck being responsible for any possible injuries they might suffer, or even the. Left, he had a good big hole which was in stark contrast. His lack of composure. He often lost control of the wheel. The brake on working. He seemed like a Volkswagen Beetle with a Lamborghini lamb, cars, Lamborghini Lamborghini engine. On incredibly tough track, it was clear he needed. Guidance before he went astray and down some dark path as so many. Running out door being swallowed. And digested by the insatiable. System I have an innate inclination to protect younger men and keep them from such places. So I decided to have a chat. With him And held him hostage several evenings and myself were instruction telling him pretty much the following. Kid, it seems like. You've got a lot of guts and you like. Boasting about it, good for you. You must know, however, that prisons are filled with people who came in front loaded and exited through the back door. Having guts and illegality is a great virtue. Yet when the. Monster's monstrous civic hypocrisy comes in the shape of organized, oppressive mechanism seeking to crush you. They don't prove enough. Then you're going to need morals and. They are powerful assets that keep. You strong will never fail. The way and the strength of human beings thought is either their advantage or they're disadvantaged the way we think defines our decisions and the force with which that thought is expressed will determine the result of our choices. The pair of thinking is what proves how much we want to achieve a goal. I just want to reiterate that this Vasyl is telling. Us what Vasilis saying. Always expressed with a pencil. It is bound to. Be a raise in the first storm that breaks. When your thoughts expressed with permanent marker. Nothing will the reason? It will become a little belief inside inside you. Of faith. Peace, build consciousness and morals, which are nothing more than the boundary being set to. Our actions they define how we condition ourselves, our attitude toward the things and events that unravel around us. In essence, there are individual laws, our personal constitution, and our autonomy, and we say I do this because by consciousness my morals allow it. While they forbid me from doing. That my prohibit me from selling guns. Protecting the school businesses drugs. My freedom, my friends, my mother my souls. They also forbid me from entering a house steal to kill an old lady to become a snitch, to cooperate with

a cop, a politician, and many other things. What do they allow me? Only bank robberies, abducting rich people and being part of the revolution toward towards a more just world. So you see how my individual constitution Forbids me far more than it far. More things than it allows me. You also understand how all of them are considered permissible in the minds of thoughtless illegality. The people around you are willing to sell and be sold to buy and be. Thought if anything from this careless list attracts you, then feel free to join them, but if you're interested in a selective, targeted and conscious armed struggle with a vision, then I'm your man. Never forget that an armed man without moral, just a criminal, pray to the eminently criminal state mechanisms cut off from the people's sense of justice. What I propose is to avoid a futile. Frontal revolution with the guard dog. A predator has not weighed its sharp teeth. Devouring the plump flock. Instead, it should sink. Them directly into the shepherd's neck. That's the goal. And remember that the sort of illegality I'm suggesting isn't thuggery, or merely opposed. It isn't easy money and living big. Instead, it is a constant struggle that tests human resilience and endless battle against your own self. And your beliefs. Our desires and. That actualisation are two completely different things, and yet we ought to fight for them if we want. To be. Worthy of them, your decision will be a. Foundation upon which you'll build what you truly. I advise you not to make such an.

**Speaker 4:** Important decision which could.

**Speaker 2:** Be your whole life, hastily. If you take a. Step down this road there's no going back when. You build your own scales and sword of justice. You'll be forced to weigh and. Cut only with these and by these it will. Be judged whether you'll be convicted or acquitted. So make sure that they're. Made out of the best material you have as human being. You are called to become a reader of your own mind and soul and bring to the surface and make precious materials to their construction. This road is very lonely, but having your own sword and scales will never feel alone. The human heart who knowingly lost the individual tools most essential building a fair society in which they will shall live happily if you're lonely. A scale and a sort. Never give them over to. Anyone, because it is them that can set you free. As easy as they can make you a sermon. I'm in no position to tell if he understood. All of this.

**Speaker 4:** But he always had a.

**Speaker 2:** Big smile on his face. He was into. It he was a kid who lived. Life to the fullest. And he showed it and he. Was right to do so. One day he was eager to get out of the. Cell happy as he was, but I stopped him. I forgot to tell you something equally important. Our body is our only ally in this lonely Rd of ours. We live inside it. We move along with. It so we have to. Take extra care of it. We don't poison it with substances, no. No, I'm not doing drugs and clean. Tomorrow morning I'll meet you outside. We'll get some exercise. In three months, the kid would ripped and I picked that extract because I think it shows 8 vessels of philosophy in quite concise detail, but also how he remembers the way. In which he talks to other people. And how he sees himself as. An incredibly inspiring mental which. You know, perhaps.

**Speaker 3:** You know fantasy spurs and joins joined the old struggle he died in. The course of. It he one of the little signs is that. In memory of his passing, various Greek insurrectionists celebrated his life learning a line of code. So he was he was, . They had clearly made a mark after that.

**Speaker 2:** I'm sure it will just. And the book is. Full of speeches like this, but yeah, I thought that one was particularly particularly basilus, I suppose like. He is such a \*\*\*\*\* character.

**Speaker 1:** Okie Doke, so we're coming towards the end of the kind of formal what we've prepared and we just say that the book is up now and it's on the desk and around and we can. You can definitely buy one afterwards.

**Speaker 2:** You get 10% discount. If you have.

**Speaker 1:** There very.

**UNKNOWN:** OK.

**Speaker 1:** Were also. There's a few things that are being brought along. With the book, so we did a book. We did a massive crowd funding campaign, so the first one we did and there was a lot of effort and work. But part of the crowd and we've made a lot of kind of rewards, so we've got like AT

shirt that's going to. Come out, we've. Got a pamphlet of like the Grease. The Greek interactionism this kind of stuff. And we have other things.

**Speaker 2:** You get like a copy of the patch. With one of those.

**Speaker 1:** You can get some more of our books if. You buy the books.

**Speaker 4:** Reason why the.

**Speaker 2:** Rewards is ordered more than just a book are delayed is because as we have just explained, editing the book was incredibly time consuming and stressful and we've only just moved. On to the next stage.

**Speaker 3:** The people with us we should just. He's laid out. The pamphlet is most of the way through. We've we've ended up doing a. And a potted history of Greek anarchism which essentially sits in two kind of phases. You've got the 19th century and very early 20th century Greek anarchism, which is in and of itself kind of an interesting phenomenon involving various things like raising strikes and all kind of stuff. But the. Greek anarchists and proper or modern Greek anarchism doesn't start until the IT works, but. It kind of. Starts kicking off shortly after the after May 68 and it's sort of heavily heavily influenced by the Situationists surprised by the. Army fraction. You know? The red brigades. All that colour jazz. This also you can you? I mean obviously, with Greek anarchism being considerably more spiky and illegal list than than anything that we've seen in Britain for a very long time, you kind of see those those influences. Go straight into the politic student uprising, which is kind of considered the start point to a great degree that the modern Greek is moved. So the pamphlet kind of goes into details on the more specifically anarchist side of things. The forward is genuinely very, very good. I think It's Polycarp Osteolysis in fact in jail, in part because of his fascinus because he was done for essentially aiding and abetting. And he wanted criminal, but he wrote it from prison. It was smuggled out for the sake of the book. And he does an excellent job of kind of talking about the factors which have led anarchist and egoism, and outlawry becomes so popular, and something which is not only fetishized to a degree, but much more broadly accepted. You know, like one of the reasons that vastness. Was able to before his second arrest stay at large for so long, despite huge bounties on his head. In a very poor. Country like Greece. Greece in this period is going through immense upheavals. It goes from someone. So the inflation goes from. Really puts it. Possibly not, it's OK. Right?

**Speaker 5:** 2010

**Speaker 3:** Yeah, yeah, but inflation increase through the 80s and 90s in particular is absolutely. It's absolutely horrifying because. 25 draculas at the at the start of the 80s to a dollar to something like \$380. By the time it switches over to become. In Europe and this kind of showcases, like a major decline in living standards and security for the great. People and you also have the imposition of partway through this, this situation of neoliberalism and kind of austerity being used as a weapon primarily. Driven by the EU and Germany to kind of. Like turning Greece into a into a pool of cheap labour essentially, and all of these things really are driving forces in not only kind of generating this sense of ongoing social unrest and rebellion, and it's like. Any pamphlet which is trying to summarize this even vaguely is obviously a lot of work, so even that were running up against deadline for the book the pamphlet is thus taking a little bit longer, like trying to trying to kind of go through all this stuff and like again like the number of. Bombings and arsons and riots and police raids and killings and sort of explaining.

**UNKNOWN:** Right?

**Speaker 3:** Kind of the how the murder of. A 15 year old in 2013 leads to just massive explosion of rebellion. Which is kind of. You know, carried on through him anyway, to very recently, and the migrant crisis which took place as well. All this. It does impact. On I think on the kind of person facilities as well, like facilities and his brother in particular. So because facility is a little bit too young to know the Greek, the impact of the Greek youngster on society, his brother, on the other hand, is 7 years. Older and his. Is teenage years and he's not, it's formative on the whole of the country, not lost on the. And if you want to kind of take, take. Take a sort of sort of the first sort of serious political bank. Serious bank robberies that are happening through the 70s and the 80s, and all of this kind of tied up with the economic situation and to kind of this, this very wobbly Republic. Established at the time.

**Speaker 1:** So OK. Thank you. So basically we have the we have the rewards which for the crowd-funder but we have more T-shirts and we have more pamphlets which will be able to be purchased and it will help support freedom and support the.

**Speaker 3:** I'm doing a lot. Of research.

**Speaker 1:** Book as.

**UNKNOWN:** Yes please.

**Speaker 1:** Well, and before I open up to any contributions that people have, if you want to make contribution obvious calls to welcome to in that we would. Very thankful to our the Greek publicans of the book who freedom to bring this English translation into the world.

**UNKNOWN:** Thank you.

**Speaker 1:** And so we're thankful for them for allowing us to do it and giving us the translation. And it's been, it's been super instructive for us to take on this project, and we hope you find the book useful, enjoyable and a rip roaring tale of.

**Speaker 2:** And thank you. To all our crowdfunder supporters. Who without their initials would not have. Probably we've been really, really \*\*\*\*\* right now.

**Speaker 3:** We had a lot of generous donations from people who sort of, way above. Sort of to put the cost of the book, yeah?

**Speaker 1:** Thank you all, cool so if anyone has any contributions you'd be welcome to make them.

**Speaker 2:** Any questions or any comment anything that we got drastically.

**Speaker 5:** Wrong, no. It's just because you mentioned in the beginning that Paulo Costas was a fan of 17 and because of. Middle school for dinners. Food strike last year. There's this thing with the two big figures in. Greek anarchy and. We can talk about massive fellow causes in the. Middle school tennis being to make. Figures as not because they were anarchists because they weren't really anarchists, but because they made it through. They had a vision and they didn't. Stay discussing for it over and over again. Which is kind of a plague. And break out of. This community. But they actually did it, and because a lot. Of people have. From my experience, I've felt a little bit less down by the metric dinners and the way that the strike ended. And how some leftist? Communities and ambassadors talked him through it to end it, while Greece was burning at the time and there was something feeling like. A really big revolt. That would happen. I'm not really. Saying that, it would be OK to. Die because that's not what I'm talking. About, but there is a bit. Of feeling that one of the. Main steers which was in. Has let us down in a way. But hello Costas. Has told the story and has made it through in a. Way that yeah he. Would be the guy, the. 50 year old Guy who would. Sit there and has had a story to tell. Again and again, and. Again, but. He has been, I mean he. Stayed through and that's the. Thing with the Greek translation is that the Greek. The Greek book as well that. You read it and you feel that he. Is kind of a punk in a way. We use this. In Greek, where we call someone a punk if they remain true to themselves from the. Beginning to the end. I don't know in the. UK you can actually say that.

**Speaker 4:** But

**Speaker 3:** There are folks who would like to have something, yeah.

**Speaker 2:** So that's not what probably.

**Speaker 5:** I mean, yeah, and that's the thing. Even though they say he remains true to himself and what? He believed from the beginning. Till now till the. Publishing of the book.

**Speaker 3:** Yeah, I mean it does. It does. Yeah, in English it does come across that kind of. Incredible level of bloody mindedness. There's definitely a sense of him being poetically minded writer and I notice he's very fluently does it.

**Speaker 5:** Yeah, that's. The thing that he doesn't really, yeah, it's what you said with ellipses, but the meaning is conveyed in a. Way that he has been through it. You know that's why he cuts the sentences that's.

**Speaker 4:** The thing this was really.

**Speaker 2:** It was so hard there because a lot of. It seems. Jarring, but then you want to keep. The way he's speaking like, yeah, I'm sure in the original. I think it makes like.



**Speaker 1:** Anything else, so we just let you go.

**Speaker 5:** But yeah, I had a question because. You said that. You have this. This one is smaller well.

**Speaker 3:** It's not smaller, so we have.

**Speaker 2:** Very thin margins.

**Speaker 4:** We tried to make a bit as. Cheap as possible.

**Speaker 1:** There are less pages of the.

**Speaker 2:** Basically, so we have a. Few cases and smaller routing.

**Speaker 5:** About the references that. Have to do with. Some good history. Do you give an explanation? To this or is it made?

**Speaker 3:** As far as well as far. As obviously within within the boundaries of the availability to research, yeah?

**Speaker 5:** Yeah, OK.

**Speaker 2:** But I mean as much as we.

**Speaker 4:** Can do by like Wikipedia.

**Speaker 1:** Obviously how the concept is like it's like.

**Speaker 3:** Could not because yeah, I.

**Speaker 1:** Said he's running for a he's rang in Greek for a Greek audience, at least initially, so he's just making these references to people who would be incredibly well known. But to English people and not well known. So you'd have to explain it here for them to get there.

**Speaker 3:** Yeah, I mean we like sort of yeah like seeing them as a team and like particularly there's a whole set of those who were in power at the time that he was. He was he was doing his thing, who had direct connections and pass. On the ministers of. The to armed struggle. Who he's he's incredibly like, harsher, we're not. Harsher, I mean, he just. Considers them fakes and fakes. Fair enough, they are ministers. But it's like it's difficult to get the sense of why he's so angry at them without doing the full research and like so then what did they do? But there's one minister who then I don't remember who is famous for swimming from Corfu Prison to freedom. The way you're thinking.

**Speaker 2:** Down the.

**Speaker 3:** And Vasilis like, well, I've been in that prison and I will say to you, I don't believe that he did that. That's a long swing, but .

**Speaker 2:** Like if I can't do it, no one can.

**Speaker 3:** But yeah, that kind of. He references the references this guy swimming and. I'm like what do. You mean you have to look up like I'm? So disappointed, he's talking about. Well, it's really. I mean, it's really. It's one of the really interesting things about doing. The book is actually like I, I. I learned so much about Greece just by kind of just going through bits and. Pieces and.

**Speaker 1:** Cool well, there's no more contributions.

**Speaker 2:** Anyone got any comments, critiques?

**Speaker 1:** You're perfectly entitled to critique. Then I'm going to. We're going to end the. Dream first of. All and we'll end the event two like I said. If you want to buy the book, it's over there. But thank you all so much. I mean, this was like we was gonna be a purposely a small event because of the COVID situation. We didn't want to have a packet out too much, but also that kind of run the risk of not no one setting up if we sell 50 we've got 11 people. We have matter of 12.

**Speaker 1:** Yeah, but in the end it worked. Out fine, and I'm very grateful that you're all here and you came. Down on the Thursday night to. Say hi Sir, thank you very much.

**Speaker 2:** Thank you everyone very much.



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Book Launch: A Normal Life by Vassilis Palaiokostas  
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