



## GSC UPDATE 17 (1 May 2013)

**N.B. there is a General Strike against austerity in Greece on May 1st.**

### **1. Solidarity Visit to Athens Report Back, 6.30 Wed 15 May, UNITE Offices 128 Theobalds Road, WC1X 8TN**

Isidoros Diakides, Co-Chair of the Greece Solidarity Campaign writes:

'We've just returned from our latest Solidarity visit to Athens, (the 4th in the last year) which was extremely successful and, in some instances, emotional. We received a lot of positive publicity in Greece. There will be a full report soon, (and a film), but for the moment I am circulating a brief advance preview, with some of the most important points.

Our 14 member delegation included MPs, leading Trade Unionists, Journalists and other activists, met MPs, Trade Unionists, social solidarity organisations, journalists, LGBTQ organisations, womens' and anti-fascist campaigners and ordinary workers.

We visited Social Markets, solidarity Clinics and Pharmacies and a major Hospital in crisis and we participated in an anti-fascist rally (our banner attracted a lot of attention, with everybody wanting to photograph it) and we had a very fruitful session with representatives of newly formed co-operatives and SYRIZA policy advisers working on 'the next government's' social economy programme.

Everyone in our delegation has already indicated that they have found the visit informative and inspirational and there have been numerous suggestions for follow ups on specific issues, as well as agreements for various articles in British publications. One of the most heartening aspects has been the evident welcome of our delegation by our Greek friends, who ritually declared the morale boosting effect of being visited by interested and sympathetic MPs, Trade Unionists and activists from abroad.



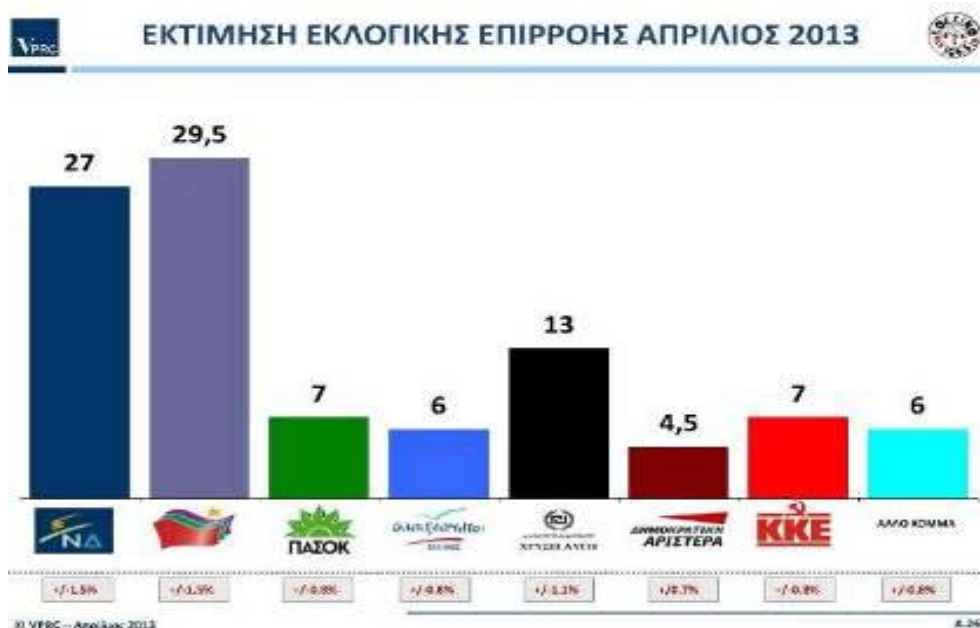
As always, our delegation was self-financed (the Greeks appreciated the fact that the participant individuals and organisations paid for all their expenses, including taxis and meals, showing real commitment) and required a huge amount of voluntary work by certain individuals. The heroes, so to speak, were:

First and foremost Rachel Newton, the GSC secretary, who together with Christos in Greece, organised more than half the events and who, throughout the visit kept a cool head, sorted out problems, kept everybody happy and generally ensured a successful outcome. Joseph, also a GSC committee member, organised meetings with numerous LGBTQ groups in Athens, a very successful evening with various progressive Greek journalists and other journalists based in Greece and handled a number of press enquiries. Christos Giovanopoulos, from the Greek 'Solidarity for All' organisation in Athens helped organise probably more than half of our programme. Giorgos Harissis, from the ADEDY (the Greek TUC for public sector workers), helped to organise meetings with the leadership of the ADEDY, with the Firefighters Unions including a visit to a firestation (part of our delegation was from the FBU including general secretary Matt Wrack); again some of you would remember Giorgos when he came last year with a SYRIZA MP for the TUC rally. A special mention is appropriate for Beniamino Bareze, a new recruit to our committee. Beniamino together with Anna (his Greek photojournalist friend), covered with their cameras (really heavy equipment which they heroically carried on their backs) almost every event. They made a large number of brief interviews, ranging from senior people we were meeting, to average Greeks in the Street, users of the services we were visiting and so on. This was all done at his own expense and without the support of the normal team that one would normally expect in making a film of this nature.

We will have a debrief, which every supporter is welcome to attend, at our next GSC meeting at 6.30 pm on Wednesday 15 May at UNITE Offices, near Holborn tube station on 128 Theobald's Road, WC1X 8TN (between Boswell Street and Old Gloucester Street).

## 2. Latest Opinion Poll in Greece

A new opinion poll gives a 2.5 points lead to SYRIZA, which was neck-and-neck with conservative New Democracy in April. The fascist Golden Dawn still holds on to 3<sup>rd</sup> place with 13%. PASOK (historically radical Social Democratic party now in coalition with the conservatives imposing the austerity measures), Independent Greeks (new conservative, but fiercely anti-austerity breakaway from the ND) and KKE (orthodox Communist party, which recently had a change of leadership) all hover around 6 or 7%. DEMAR (Democratic Left - EuroLeft breakaway from SYRIZA, but now third party in the coalition government with PASOK and ND) is on 4.5%.



This surge in SYRIZA support is a positive sign for those fighting the Troika imposed austerity measures, but should be still treated with caution; almost half of the population, according to the same poll, say that they would either not vote, or spoil their vote, or don't know/won't say, or would vote for other smaller parties.

### **3. Anniversary of the Greek Coup which brought military dictatorship to Greece**

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1967 an American backed group of Greek Army officers (known as the Colonels) seized power from the elected government and imposed a brutal military dictatorship, that took a massacre of student protesters 7 years later to fall. Remnants of the supporters of that junta are still evident (especially within the police and the army ranks) and are forming the spine for the recently grown fascist Golden Dawn party. Greek anti fascists marked the anniversary with a rally in the centre of Athens while our delegation was there and we took part; there will be some pictures of the rally in our delegation film.

### **4. Anniversary of the German Occupation in World War Two and just another hero**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1941 the then Greek government, after a protracted and bloody resistance (first against the Italian invasion which they managed to rebuff, and then the German attack which eventually managed to break the resistance) conceded defeat and agreed to hand over the country to the Nazi occupation army. This dogged resistance, unique at the time across Europe when other countries seemed to fall easily to the German Army's advances, is credited with causing severe delays in Hitler's plans to invade Russia and his eventual defeat. Churchill said 'from now on we won't be saying that the Greeks fight like heroes, but that the heroes fight like Greeks'. The handover was marked at a symbolic 'change of flag' (from the Greek to the Nazi Swastika) ceremony on the Acropolis. The ceremony however didn't turn out as the Germans and their collaborators expected; Konstantinos Koukidis, the young soldier who was guarding the Greek flag at that time, first refused to lower it and when it was taken down he took it with tears in his eyes, wrapped himself in it in front of the Germans and jumped off the Acropolis to his death.

### **5. 'Into the fire' - an excellent forty minute film on the plight of immigrants in Greece, by Guy Smallman and Kate Mara, was recently released via YouTube at**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=NMOuD0SQJs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=NMOuD0SQJs). It is hard-hitting documentary which shows the plight of refugees and migrants in Athens. Shot and edited with sensitivity and compassion, it doesn't pull its punches and makes for harrowing viewing in parts. It gives incredible insights into the reality faced by people who simply want to lead peaceful, normal lives. Its origins go back to this time last year when the two directors went to Athens, with the first GSC delegation, to make a series of short films about austerity. If you know anyone who would like to host the film on their blog or website Guy would love to hear from you at [guy.smallman@btinternet.com](mailto:guy.smallman@btinternet.com)

**6. Alter Summit.** On June 7th and 8th, all European movements and organizations are invited to the Alter Summit **in Athens** which will be organized with the Greek social movement with the support of civil society organizations, trade unions, NGOs, political and cultural personalities from all around Europe. The Alter Summit in Athens will be a step forward in the building of more convergence between movements opposed to the current anti-social and anti-ecological policies promoted by European governments and institutions. It will be a highly symbolic gathering, since Greece has been the laboratory of the destructive austerity and so-called competitiveness policies, but can also become the laboratory of the resistance against austerity. It will be the occasion to stress that the struggle of the Greek social movements is a European one, and show the solidarity of European organizations and movements towards the Greek struggles. It will be also the occasion to present the Alter Summit manifesto, voicing the alternative proposals of the social movement against the crisis, and also to celebrate the struggles of the last year, and to propose a common

agenda of action. The Greek social movement organising the summit are also preparing the ground for the establishment of a permanent network of solidarity organizations from across Europe with a conference to take place during the summit and have invited GSC to participate. Anyone interested in going to the summit and would like to be part of the GSC delegation please get in touch. For more information see <http://www.altersummit.eu/>

### **7. The People's Assembly Against Austerity : Westminster Methodist Central Hall, Saturday 22 June**

The People's Assembly Against Austerity, with 2.500 delegates expected, including politicians, Trades Unions and numerous radical organisations, including delegations from a range of other countries, is taking place on June the 22<sup>nd</sup> in London. It is to be followed by an international conference on 23 June. GSC will be prominent in many of the events. Details at [www.coalitionofresistance.org.uk](http://www.coalitionofresistance.org.uk)

*Many individuals in the UK, including unions with over 3 million members, are affiliated to the Greece Solidarity Campaign. We support all (non-fascist) parties and community campaigns opposing austerity in Greece. Please encourage more to join the Greece Solidarity Campaign*  
[http://greesolidarity.org/?page\\_id=469](http://greesolidarity.org/?page_id=469) and support the website and facebook pages.

- solidarity and friendship -  
Isidoros Diakides and Paul Mackney  
Co-Chairs, Greece Solidarity Campaign

Contact us at: [www.greesolidarity.org](http://www.greesolidarity.org)