

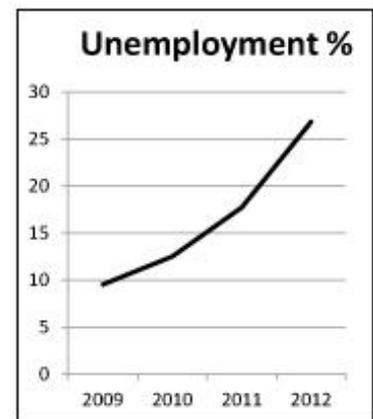
Social aspects of the Greek Drama and the struggle for a way out

Note: This is a “non paper” for the information of our international friends. Despite been all but exhaustive, it aspires to offer an updated view on the actual social conditions in Greece.

The **humanitarian crisis** in Greece is worsening day by day as a result of the policies decided by the IMF-EU-ECB Troika and implemented by the puppet tripartite government (composed by the right-wing Nea Dimokratia, the “social democratic” PASOK and the so called “Democratic Left”). The official data that have been published last week by the Hellenic Statistical Authority under the auspices of EUROSTAT, despite been “embellished”, are quite revealing:

- **UNEMPLOYMENT ALMOST TRIPLED SINCE 2009**

The **unemployment**, which was 9,5% in 2009, before the transformation of Greece into a guinea pig by the Troika and its local lackeys, has jumped to 12,5% in 2010, then to 17,7% in 2011, and now (official data for October 2012) amounts to **26,8%**. What makes things even worse is that actually, out of the 1.300.000 unemployed, less than 200.000 receive any form of “unemployment benefit” (the term is rather an euphemism: the “benefit” for the few lucky ones ranges from € 180 to € 468 per month, and is paid for a period of 5 to 12 months, depending on the wage, the length of employment, and the number of dependent members of the family).



- **EXPLOSION OF POVERTY**

The percentage of the population living in conditions of **poverty**, from 12,1% in 2009 passed to 16,3% in 2010, and in 2011 jumped to **22,9%**. Considering that in 2011 a series of social services and benefits (which now have been eliminated) still existed, the report of the Statistical Authority expresses “serious concern” for further explosive increase of the poverty in 2012 and 2013.

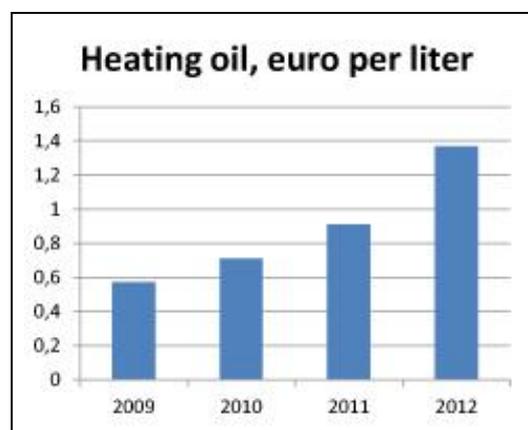
- **NO MORE HEALTH CARE**

As nowadays the **right to health care** depends on the number of days that someone has worked during the previous year, the long-term unemployed and the uninsured

workers **lose their access** to health care. In the meantime, the health services offered to the general population have been reduced, since several public hospitals and prevention centers have been **shut down** as a result of the cuts (40%) in the health and welfare budget, combined with the introduction of increased fees even for the insured patients. These problems, combined with the critical situation of the public hospitals still functioning (many suffer by **tragic shortages** in personnel and even in basic material, such as medicines, disinfectants, bandages etc.) and the inability of many citizens (mainly pensioners) to pay the much increased share for their medicaments, has led even the EU's Centre for Disease Control to warn against an imminent outbreak of viral infections, hospital viruses, contagious diseases, HIV etc.

- **LACK OF HOUSE HEATING**

The rapid decline of the **heating oil consumption** is another indication of the ongoing extreme pauperization of the population: compared to 2011 (a year that was marked already by a first sharp decrease in heating oil consumption), there is a **75% decrease of the consumption** in December 2012, despite the cold spell in the biggest part



of the country. A large part of the population is suffering today by cold because of the unforeseen successive increase of taxes imposed on heating oil by the Troika and the government, which resulted to the **sharp rise of its price** (average prices per liter 2009: 0,57 euro, 2010: 0,71 euro, 2011: 0,91 euro, and in 2012: 1,37 euro).

- **THE SPECTER OF HUNGER RETURNS**

The **hunger** is spreading rapidly all over the country, especially in the urban areas, for the first time since the era of the Nazi occupation. There are no available data on national level, but the case of the Diocese of Neapolis and Stavroupolis (two suburbs of Thessaloniki in Northern Greece) is a **characteristic example**: in 2010 the soup kitchens of the Diocese offered meals to 1.387 destitute and homeless citizens, in 2011 to 2.445 citizens, and in 2012 to 5.223 citizens. Another example is the desperate call of teachers' unions in several regions of the country, informing the authorities that many pupils arrive hungry at school, with constantly increasing cases of daily faint of

pupils in the classrooms due to hunger. Moreover, the hospital doctors' association has announced that a constantly increasing number of infants are brought to public hospitals with severe stomach upsets – the reason is that their parents cannot afford to feed them with the (very expensive) baby milk and other infant feeding products; instead, they buy the cheapest products for adults.

The movement of social solidarity: A tool for survival and change

Against this dramatic situation, and simultaneously with the struggle for the overthrow of the whole corrupt and catastrophic political system, both the local organizations of the Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA) and hundreds of grassroots initiatives of citizens are forming a **movement of social solidarity** rapidly expanding all over Greece. These new forms of organization, albeit still uncoordinated and scattered, are objectively contributing towards the building of a broad popular current aiming at the overthrow of the old political system.

This current, still under formation, does not limit its goals to the overthrow of the government, but it tracks a way out of the catastrophic crisis through the country's **productive reconstruction** and the pursuit of profound **political, economic and social changes**. Last but not least, these new forms



of people's self-organization directly serve the cause of the masses' survival in dignity, and thus contribute decisively at maintaining the masses' fighting spirit and ability to struggle.

All these characteristics differentiate this movement from the “traditional” charity that, no matter if sincere or not, leads rather to passivity than to involvement in the struggle. The Communist Organization of Greece actively participates in this movement of social solidarity, striving in order to deepen these characteristics and, consequently, to accelerate its transformation into **one of the main components of a broad political current for radical change**. Some of the forms of social solidarity developing in our country are:

- Social clinics and social pharmacies, thanks to the voluntary work of medical and paramedical staff and to offers of infrastructure and materials by citizens, municipalities with progressive mayors, etc.

- Structures of after-school auxiliary classes, thanks to the voluntary work of teachers.
- Markets of agricultural products that are sold in low prices directly from the peasants-producers to the consumers in urban areas, without the market's "middlemen". Moreover, the peasants offer gratis a percentage of products (depending on the total amount they have sold) to the neighborhood initiatives for free distribution to the neediest families.
- Social groceries and other structures of food distribution for unemployed and homeless citizens, thanks to offers by popular initiatives, municipalities, small and medium enterprises, etc.

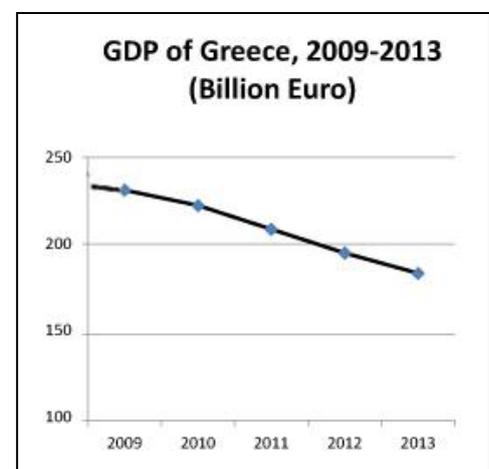
Some more additional information

1) STATISTICS AND REALITY

The **poverty line** is defined as a percentage (60%) of the average annual GDP per capita. So, when they say that 16,3% of the Greeks lived in poverty in 2010, they mean that 16,3% enjoyed an annual income of less than € 7.178. However, the poverty line in 2011, following the GDP decrease, amounted to only € 5.950. And in 2011 there were 22,9% of Greeks living under this **further reduced poverty line**! This fact gives a better idea of the rapid pauperization of the Greek population already in 2011 (that is, before the implementation of the last "Memorandum" with the Troika – a new sharp rise of the statistics concerning those living in poverty is to be expected for 2012).

2) WAR-LIKE RECESSION

The **recession** in Greece, which continues for the 6th consecutive year now, is so dramatic that "normally" corresponds only to a war situation. Back in 2009, the GDP of Greece amounted to € 231,1 billion. The (already very "optimistic") budget for 2013 previews a GDP of € 183 billion. That corresponds to a **GDP decrease of over 20%**, after years of shock "therapy"! According to the Bank of Greece, the GDP in 2013, compared to 2008, shall be decreased by 24%.



3) DRAMATIC LOSS OF HOUSEHOLDS' INCOME

According to the European Commission itself, between 2009 and 2011 Greece has suffered the most **violent drop** in “real household disposable income”: the Greek households lost **17%** of their real disposable income, while the other Southern European households counted income losses ranging from 5% (Ireland) to 8% (Spain). And the data for 2012 are yet to come...



Most of the Greek workers and employees, both in the private and in the public sector (as well as the pensioners), have lost 30% or 40% or even 50% of their income during these nightmarish three years. And, yet, they are considered as the "lucky" ones, since they continue to have a job! A job that now is paid € 586 (gross!) per month, while those under 25 receive a monthly salary of € 511 (always gross!). **The reality is even worse**, though: In the private sector, many employers are blackmailing the workers and employees and oblige them to accept “salaries” of € 300, of course without any social insurance. On top, many employers (including “established” multinational firms and big enterprises) are not paying even these ridiculous salaries during many months. Thus, they transform their employees into hostages who continue to work without payment, hoping to receive sometime at least a part of their due salaries.

4) HEAVY TAXATION

The **taxation** of the employed, self-employed and of the small and medium enterprises becomes heavier from one month to another. For example, the taxes shall be increased up to **420%** for the self-employed and the small and medium enterprises in 2013. The tax reductions for the families of employed or unemployed with children, for medical expenses, etc., have been **abolished**. At the same time, the multinationals that are active in Greece, the local “entrepreneurs”, as well as the ship-owners, are practically exempted from taxes. On the “standard” and continuously increased taxation of the popular strata is added an endless series of “**extraordinary**” **taxes**, in the form of housing tax, social solidarity (!) tax, and so on. All the revenues from these taxes are thrown directly in the black hole of the “recapitalization



of the banking system” and in the payment of the debt’s interests. Moreover, the rich and the big enterprises are enjoying provocative reductions (up to 60%) or even complete exemption as far as the “extraordinary” taxes are concerned: among them casinos, TV channels, multinational companies as IKEA and Media Markt, etc. At the same time, thousands of poor households who cannot afford to pay are punished by the Greek government, which **cuts off the electricity supply** at their houses if they don’t pay the housing tax (an inhumane “punishment” that has been declared anti-constitutional by the Supreme Court, but nonetheless continues to be implemented by the puppet government, following instructions of the IMF-EU-ECB Troika).

Post Scriptum:

There exist other aspects of the Greek Drama, equally important with the humanitarian crisis. Some of them concern the continuous violation of the Constitution and of the last formal remnants of bourgeois democracy in our country. Other aspects refer to the loss of national independence, which has taken a strict institutional form with the last “Memorandum” imposed by the IMF-EU-ECB Troika. There are also certain aspects related to threats menacing the sovereign rights and even the very territorial integrity of Greece. We will try to present them in an updated document in the near future.



Athens, 14 January 2013

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