

A WARNING TO UKRAINE

Greece Confronts EU-Imposed Humanitarian Catastrophe

by Dean Andromidas

Why would anyone want to join the European Union? The only sane reason to join an association of nations would be to enjoy expanded economic benefits and democratic rights. Well, the EU offers neither. It is not only its moribund economy, with high unemployment, collapsing living standards, etc., but it is now implementing a policy of mass murder.

The most obvious case is Greece, where the EU has turned a debt crisis into a humanitarian catastrophe.

In 2010, Greece had a debt to gross domestic product ratio of 125%. The EU bureaucrats declared this to be unsustainable, and Greece was forced into a bailout. At the end of the third quarter 2013, that ratio had risen to 183%. The government's gross debt stands at EU339.6 billion. At least EU270 billion is now held by foreigners. Between the first quarter of 2008, and the third quarter of 2013, it has paid EU67 billion in interest alone.

The over EU200 billion bailout has exclusively gone to pay off creditors, and in the process, created ever-expanding new debt. Despite the widely held belief that German taxpayers will foot the bill for the bailout, the fact is that the individual countries of the euro group issue a guarantee for the bonds that are floated by the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), the bailout fund. The bonds are bought by banks and other institutions, and the Greek government pays off the bonds. Only if there is a default will the non-Greek taxpayers lose. For the banks, such as Deutsche Bank,

the bonds are all but free, since once purchased, the bank goes to the European Central Bank (ECB) and receives new liquidity. This arrangement is great for the banks, but lethal for the people of Greece.

Since signing the bailout agreement and implementing its memoranda, Greece has been put under the tutelage of the infamous Troika of experts, or more precisely debt collectors, from the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Their policy has destroyed the economy, and is killing off the population by creating a humanitarian catastrophe. Some of the evidence:

- Official Greek unemployment has increased from an average of around 10% to 28%, but in reality, it is closer to 50%. Youth unemployment is an impossible 65%. Of the officially registered unemployed, only 16% are receiving any unemployment benefits. Nominal and real wages have been reduced respectively by 23% and 27.8%.
- One-third of the population lives below the poverty line. While no hard figures exist, the number of Greeks who have left the country seeking work is between 500,000 and 1 million. These are not the poor peasants of the 1950s and 1960s, but highly educated young people—doctors, engineers, academics, and scientists—the future of the country.
- The balance of trade has improved only because of a collapse of imports, while exports increased only marginally. In fact, there has been no real increase in



The Troika-run Greek Health Minister Adonis Georgiadis is denying life-saving medical care to cancer sufferers, and others. Here Georgiadis (left) is confronted by an angry audience in London, March 16, 2014.

exports since the nominal increase, given in euros, represents the petroleum products from the country's refineries. There was no increase in the volume of petroleum exports, but only an increase in price. In point of fact, exports to the EU continue to decline. In the 1990s, 61% of Greek exports went to the EU; in 2012, the figure was 29.8%. The entire economy has shrunk by more than 25%, the official figure.

- There is virtually no liquidity in the country. Despite that fact that banks get liquidity from the ECB for virtually nothing, retail interest rates are a usurious 8.3%, the highest since Greece joined the Eurozone.
- Greek banks are loaded with non-performing debts, while companies, including those in the tourist industry are being starved of credit.

The EU Flu Massacre of 2014

Mass murder is occurring in Greece as you reads these words. It is being done very efficiently by taking down the health system, on orders of the Troika.

Use of the term "mass murder" is not rhetorical, as the following examples show.

Look at the death toll during this year's flu season. As of this writing, at least 110 people have died of influenza just in the last several weeks. This is not only the highest rate in Europe, but the second-highest absolute number. The Athens Medical Association (ISA) revealed on March 26 that by contrast, 155 people had

died of flu in Spain, whose population is 46 million, four times that of Greece's 11 million. In France, which has a population six times larger, 52 people died from the virus; while in Romania, which has twice as many citizens as Greece, and is officially the poorest country in the EU, just four people succumbed to the flu. There were also only four deaths in Sweden, which has a comparable population to Greece. Britain reported no deaths from the virus.

Under "normal" conditions, Greece would have had perhaps 25 flu deaths. The balance of 85 deaths must be viewed as murder, since it is admitted by the government that it did not purchase enough flu vaccine, and did not conduct an annual flu-vaccination campaign for the most vulnerable, a fact that the ISA rightfully termed "criminal."

In a statement, the Medical Association charged that the cause of the flu deaths was the lack of vaccinations, and noted that pharmacists had reported a shortage of flu jabs and doses supplied to health centers of the state insurance fund, EOPYY.

"It is tragic and criminal that people are dying for a vaccine that costs EU6 each," the statement said.

EU Promotes Fascists

It is not surprising that the Greek Health Minister, Adonis Georgiadis, is a well-known ideological fascist who was recruited into the ruling New Democracy Party from the right-wing Laos party. He is a publisher and book dealer. Among his favorite authors, whose books he sells, is Konstaninos Plevris, the number-one fascist ideologue in Greece. His son, Thanos Plevris, is also in the ruling party, and serves as legal advisor to the Health Minister.

Georgiadis, under orders of his Troika masters, is implementing a policy that kills.

The British medical journal, *Lancet* has published a study in which it reports that the Greek government and the Troika are in a state of "denial" over the catastrophic consequences of their policy.

It's worse than "denial"—it is intentional: Georgiadis, asked by the *Washington Post* about the fact that the massive cuts in health care left an alarming number of cancer sufferers with having to pay for their own medications and even surgeries which they cannot afford,



PressTV videograb

Medical workers from social clinics and the main state hospital in Athens protest against cuts to health care, Jan. 31, 2014. Eight thousand doctors have been cut from the public health system.

replied that, while there is a special fund (only EU17 million!) for emergency aid for those without insurance, “Illnesses like cancer are not considered urgent, unless you are in the final stages.”

While the exact number of deaths from cancer is not available, it is widely known that hundreds, if not thousands, of cancer patients have no access to medical insurance. And, it is not just cancers; the same conditions apply to those suffering from most serious diseases, while the severely handicapped have seen their benefits cut dramatically.

Unprecedented death rates have been accomplished, according to *Lancet*, through savage cuts in funding of health care. The report showed how uninsured cancer patients are left to pay for their own life-saving treatment as a result of losing their social security coverage due to long-term unemployment. It reports that the health-care budget has been cut by 25% since 2009, and the number of uninsured has increased from 500,000 in 2008, to at least 2.3 million today. Greece now spends less on health care than any of the pre-2004 EU members. For example, the public hospital budget was cut by 26% between 2009 and 2011; in the last two years it has been cut even more. The budget for medicines was slashed from EU4.7 billion in 2010, to EU2.88 billion in 2012, and then to EU2 billion for

2014. Doctors at the country’s hospitals have not been paid for six months, prompting strikes throughout the hospital system.

Mental-health care has been savagely cut. Funding for the sector was cut 20% between 2010 and 2011, and by a further 55% between 2011 and 2012. Cases of depression have risen by 250%; suicides, by 45% between 2007 and 2011. Cuts in mosquito spraying have led to the resurgence of malaria, which was virtually wiped out 40 years ago.

Thousands of pregnant women no longer have access to health care. The result is infanticide by decree of the Troika: Poor nutrition and lack of medical check-ups have contributed to infant deaths, which had previously been falling, but jumped by more than 43% between 2008 and 2010, as families cut off from state health care were unable to afford private treatment. There has been a 21% rise in still-births, according to figures from the Greek National School of Public Health.

Under the guidelines established by the Troika, Georgiadis has shut down major sections of the national health-insurance program. Under the previous program, general practitioners worked for the national health insurance company, while maintaining their private practice. This gave the patient the choice of keep-

ing the same primary doctor, which is the only way a competent general health system works. This system was closed down, essentially overnight, and all 8,000 doctors dismissed. The new system involves general clinics where doctors are hired on contract for as little as one month. Its implementation has been so slow that most of the country is left without access to general health care.

Not surprisingly, Georgiadis has become a hated figure in Greece, and enters public places with caution. His reputation followed him recently to a public event in which he was the keynote speaker at Imperial College in London, where Greek students and academic staff had made it clear before the Minister's appearance that they opposed his invitation to speak there.

"The Minister has repeatedly bullied doctors and medical staff on national television, putting the blame on them for the existing problems, while advertising the need for budget cuts," they said in a statement. They added, "The rise of Mr. Georgiadis in Greek politics is a symptom of the authoritarian, far-right turn of the Greek government."

The EU's Lawlessness

While the European Union ideologues never stop criticizing countries for not failing to adhere to the "rule of law," the reality is that the EU itself is the biggest violator of the law, even its own treaties.

Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, Member of the European Parliament representing the Free Democratic Party of Germany, but of Greek descent, charged that the cuts in the Greek health-care system have set the country back decades.

Speaking at the European Parliament in Brussels on March 5, Chatzimarkakis charged that what the EU allows the Troika to do in Greece goes against fundamental human rights.

Slamming German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Chatzimarkakis said, "There are a lot of legal studies that tell us that the legal security of human rights, basic civil rights, are not given anymore. Mrs Merkel and Mr Barroso present to us another Greece, and not the real Greece."

The United People's Front (EPAM), a new Greek political party calling for Greece to drop the euro and return to the drachma, detailed in its election program for the European Parliamentary elections how the Troika's policies violate EU treaties. Among a long

list of violations they include the following:

- Treaty on European Union: Article 2 on human dignity, freedom, democracy and human rights; Article 3 on peace and well-being; Articles 145-150 on employment and 151-166 on social policy.


- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU: Article 1 on human dignity; Article 14 on the right to education; Article 17 on the right to property (people have had their property confiscated because they were unable to pay the dramatically higher taxes, especially the property tax); Article 26 on the rights of the elderly; Article 28 on the integrity of persons with disabilities; Article 34 on the right to social security and social assistance. And of course, Article 35 on the right to health care.

In addition to EPAM, the other opposition parties—Syriza, Independent Greeks, Drachma 5, and Plan B—are demanding the suspension of the Troika's Memorandum, cancellation of the majority of the debt, a Glass-Steagall banking reform, and other emergency measures to deal with the humanitarian catastrophe. In addition, EPAM, Drachma 5, and Plan B are calling for returning to the drachma.

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