

The Development of Fascist Hatred in Greece

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On Saturday April 30th the Greek fascist party, Golden Dawn, attempted to create blood banks for the exclusive use of Greek nationals. Across the country, Golden Dawn members, with much pre publicity arrived at general hospitals to donate blood which they demanded was to be restricted to Greeks only. At the general hospital in Samos, as in many other places, the fascists were met by a broad coalition of opponents as well as medical staff who blocked their approach to the blood donation centre. The face off started at 9.30am and ended at 4.00 pm when the blood centre closed for the weekend. Golden Dawn members departed without success.

It was a significant victory for those opposing Golden Dawn. In Samos at least this was an all too rare occasions when members from all the various left parties joined together in common purpose. The atmosphere amongst the 50 or so activists was up beat. The medical staff involved never left the front line of the picket and were steadfast throughout the stand off. There was complete unanimity that what Golden Dawn was proposing was utterly unacceptable and inhumane. Here was a red line that could not and would not be crossed.

But the resistance also raised some disturbing issues about the relationship between Golden Dawn and the Greek state. In the lead up to the day, doctors associations and many other health professional groups had made it clear that the Golden Dawn proposal was completely unacceptable and breached every ethical principle that underpinned their work. The giving of blood is without conditions they said, and no one had any right to determine the recipients of donated blood. Such sentiments were reported in much of Greece's mainstream media. But from the government itself, and specifically the Ministry of Health, there was silence. It is a revealing silence. On an issue as blatantly immoral as this, which clearly dismayed so many people, the silence of the government profoundly demonstrated that Golden Dawn has little to fear from the state across a wide spectrum of its activities.

In Samos, the extent of this complicity was demonstrated by the senior administration of the hospital. Those forming the picket were able to see the hospital manager's office at the end of the corridor by the main entrance. For many hours we could see the leader of the of the small Golden Dawn contingent repeatedly entering and leaving her office. What people wanted to know was what there could be to negotiate? The matter was clear cut. Blood donations are unconditional and this principle was non-negotiable. The doctors on the picket said that this was the position of the staff throughout the hospital who were utterly opposed to the Golden Dawn initiative which they regarded as both inhumane and illegal.

At around 2pm the chief state attorney on the island arrived and he too was in and out of the manager's office for over an hour. Throughout the entire day, medical staff on the picket were being called to see the hospital manager and it was through these channels that information about the manager's thinking became clear. From the outset, the fact that she

did not order Golden Dawn to leave the hospital and give up their attempt to donate blood to a Greek only blood bank was a clear sign if not of her sympathies then of her moral weakness and cowardice. That she was prepared to negotiate with Golden Dawn for so long reinforced this assessment. That she failed to make a clear statement to those on the picket and the attendant press; that she failed to support her medical staff, and then once the attorney arrived, decided that the police should be called to remove the picket on the grounds that the noise of the protest disturbed the patients all pointed in the same direction. Weakness and complicity.

The police never arrived, although during the 6 hours of the picket police cars periodically arrived and drove through the hospital grounds. It was also known that under cover police mingled with the protesters throughout the day.

There is however no room for complacency with respect to Golden Dawn. On the issue of Greek only blood banks for example, we learnt during the day that the fascists were using a little known loop hole which allows clubs and associations to create specific blood deposits under their control and determine who might be a recipient. We learnt that this was the main issue of the negotiations between Golden Dawn and the hospital manager and it seemed that she had conceded this point to Golden Dawn even though past practice was restricted to sports groups and similar associations and not to political parties. As far as we can tell, Golden Dawn has created its own blood 'account' in the general hospital of Samos. It is a point of law which is now being challenged especially given the fascists explicit and well publicised stance in all its so called welfare support whether food or material assistance which is restricted to Greeks only.

Whereas the Mayor of Athens prevented Golden Dawn handing out food aid in Syntagma Square on the Thursday before Easter (May 2nd 2013) on the grounds that it was fuelled by racism and hatred and beyond the bounds of humane behaviour, the Greek state in the main continues to refuse to condemn and prevent Golden Dawn from poisoning public institutions over which they have control. The medical staff on the Samos picket told of Golden Dawn members coming on to hospital wards dressed in their fascist regalia offering support only to Greeks and of harassing the migrant workers who are employed as carers by families to support sick relatives in the hospitals. Similar events are occurring in schools with teachers who oppose fascism being harassed and children of refugees and migrants being attacked and intimidated.

Two important lessons were learnt on Samos Island at the end of April. One is the necessity for a united front to confront the virus of Golden Dawn. Humanity was the common ground and this must be sustained and developed. Secondly, the Greek state has to be confronted for its complicity and failure to confront this virus of hatred both here in Samos and throughout the country. Tourism is an essential part of the Greek economy. Anyone thinking of coming to Greece (and particularly Athens) should be writing to the Greek embassy in their own country asking for assurances that they will be safe and secure when they visit. This is particularly urgent if your skin colour clearly identifies you as being non Greek. The Greek state needs to know that their complicity with fascism will not be tolerated and that their silence on matters which degrade humanity and expose people to hatred and violence is completely unacceptable.

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