

Greece – Idomeni Refugee Camp 16th - 20st April 2016

I have a long connection with Syria through my father Frank Beck, who was a professor of painting there for 10 years, with his amigo Fateh Moudarres, the top painter, as well as other artists of Damascus.

A man walked into my first Paris exposition in 1994. “Are you Frank’s son?” “Yes”. He gave me a big hug. “He taught me everything I know”. The affection he and 12 other former students of Frank in Paris, after 30 years, was very strong and amazing. They enormously supported the exposition.

Hearing of the gas assault on the camp on 10th of April, I flew to Thessaloniki with my rucksack full of clothes and food, took a bus to Evzonoi, but was forbidden to continue further by bus or taxi.

At Evzonoi I asked for a taxi, but in a hotel, there was a table full of very beautiful Spanish volunteers having breakfast, who invited me “Come with us through the police lines.” (as medico (doctor)).

We took off and reached Idomeni – 10,000 souls in a town of five houses + railway station.

I began drawing and passing out food and clothes from my rucksack.

At midday, I reached the Spanish base, where there were firefighter’s hangars for the medicos.

I went off again drawing and bought a tub of yoghurt for lunch using the lid of the tub for a spoon. I found a shady tree; it was very hot. A bloke came around the tree with a spoon “Come sit with us” on their carpet at the tent. They offered me sweet tea. They were a beautiful family from Aleppo who I draw a few times.

This tradition of hospitality of the Syrians continues in this situation of terrible adversity.

In a crowd, a young woman with a child came asking, “Draw me ?”. The drawing for me is “Mother Syria” – proudly majestic. The woman’s enduring of this terrible situation was monumentally impressive (see attached drawing) – magic!

And the endless giving of the Spanish volunteers, often to dine at night. And the hospitality of the refugees, was a beautiful light for humanity. Perhaps the ethos for the next 3000 years begins in Idomeni.

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