

Greece and Golden Dawn: The lessons to learn



THE only way to understand fully recent events surrounding Golden Dawn and its activities in Greece is see this movement as arising from and accurately expressing in its violent criminal nature the bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie's capitalist system as a whole.

This bankruptcy causes the economic and social crisis shaking Europe and above all Greece, where it has gone the furthest. Greece is the sharp point of their attack on the lives and conditions of working people.

This system in crisis needs and breeds bodies like Golden Dawn.

It is the bourgeois class as a whole, with its European "project", its IMF and its "Troika" which is to blame for this crisis and which both provides the conditions for [zum](#) and actively fosters the growth of such organisations.

Unless this is understood, the relations between Golden Dawn and the Greek state must remain a mystery. It is clear that the group has for a long time had extremely strong links with the right wing political establishment. It is now notorious what extensive support they have enjoyed among the police. Prompted by mass revulsion at the murder of Pavlos Fyssas and nudged by the same leading politicians and officials of the European Union who have inflicted untold misery on the Greek people, the Samaras government indulged in a great act of political drama.

Charade

First it sacked a number of police officers, many very senior, who are known to be linked to Golden Dawn. Then prudently masked "counter-terrorist" officers publicly dragged Golden Dawn's leaders into police custody and before the courts. Others raided their homes and offices, uncovering a sickening

hoard of Nazi and racist memorabilia, documents and weapons. Within an extremely short space of time the state prosecutor produced a hair-raising indictment of their activities and structure.

This was hardly the thorough legal slog it might appear: All leading figures in the Greek bourgeois establishment are perfectly aware of what Golden Dawn is and how it operates. Then, almost as quickly, [wholesale mlb jerseys](#) the group's leaders are released on bail, among mounting concerns that the legal authorities will manage to fumble the case and in the end let them off scot-free.

The 1920s and 1930s are replete with examples of similar adventures which befell for example Hitler's Nazi Party after the "Beer Hall" putsch in Munich in 1923, or later under the Von Papen and Brüning cabinets in the early 1930s. One minute the Nazis were banned as terrorists; the next, Göring and his brown-shirts were put in charge of the whole police-force over a broad swathe of Germany as a prelude to the Nazi takeover.

Under these circumstances, legal and constitutional steps offer no effective guarantee or protection against the kind of future Golden Dawn and their ilk want to impose. What is needed is a way out of the crisis of capitalism. Working people are faced with a choice: either they destroy capitalism and open the way to socialism, or they face a future of fascism.

That is why we reproduce in this special issue of our Bulletin the statement by Kokkinos, the left wing group within the radical left party SYRIZA. Once these political issues are understood, a look at the events which [быть](#) followed the death of Pavlos Fyssas becomes highly instructive.

Ten days in Greece

An anti-fascist rapper and engineering worker, Fyssas was stabbed to death by a large group of neo-Nazis on the night of 17/18 September in the Keratsini area of Piraeus. Police arrested a suspect associated with Golden Dawn, Giorgos Roupakias, who confessed to the killing

In the following days, tens of thousands took to the

[Meistritele](#) streets in anti-fascist marches and rallies, with supporting events across Europe.

The nation-wide revulsion against the planned and deliberate stabbing of Fyssas was fed by press reports and interviews which cast some light on the internal life of Golden Dawn. One anonymous ex-member interviewed by Ethnos newspaper painted a picture of a classic fascist party with a violent, dictatorial and criminal inner core. The interview was translated into English by Greece Solidarity Movement New York (www.akny.org/2013/09/insider-blows-open-Greek-neo-nazi-operations).

The informant became involved because the local branch in Nikaia put out a call on Facebook saying some Pakistanis were going to attack their offices. He paid 20 euros, proved he was Greek, and got a membership card and number.

However, from being a member he quickly graduated to the "nucleus" of activists who "will do everything, no matter what, without question". The "nucleus" became fashionable and grew so quickly that a further "closed" nucleus was even established within the "open" core. New members soon had to "participate in five or six actions" to win acceptance.

Although "actions" included graffiti writing and terrorising immigrants, it turned out that having "hit a Pakistani ... afterwards I would sell him protection" ... "the local chapter of Golden Dawn protects the Pakistanis. The chapter takes the clothes donated from regular people for the poor, and they sell them to Pakistanis who sell them on the street market and then give a percentage of the profit to Golden Dawn". The "closed nucleus" also pocketed much of the money raised in this way and through donations.

The unemployed leader of Golden Dawn in Nikaia, the informant reported, and his wife "live in a big, comfortable house... He pays for electricity, water, maintenance, he lives respectably ..." All this is done with the full knowledge of Golden Dawn top leaders and Members of Parliament. Members who tried to protest suffered badly: "Comrades who spoke about those things openly were beaten up. They had gone with proof and evidence

and they were beaten up and kicked out of the party”.

The Nikaia branch – which provides muscle for Golden Dawn activities over a wide area –has an “attack battalion” of about thirty members. They wear a “city uniform” of black-and-white camouflage clothes. But when involved in an attack, they wear black clothes and motorcycle helmets to hide their faces, and they do not carry any Golden Dawn identifying symbols.

On one occasion the local leader was rendered “totally beside himself” when anarchists marched through the area. He ordered all his men onto the street with helmets, shields and whatever clubs they had. Weapons like that are normally kept hidden in houses and frequently moved to evade police searches.

To become a member of the “closed nucleus”, the informant reports “you have to have a really strong stomach. To accept everything. You are a zero, nothing. Do you know what it means to tell you to get down and do crunches and then they kick you on the sides in front of everyone? You’re nothing, and whatever they tell you to do you must do it. You have no opinion. It’s an order and that’s the end of it!”

He explains that while prominent public leaders of Golden Dawn may not have [Πωλε?ται](#) known of the attack being prepared on Fyssas, it could not have happened without the knowledge of the leader of the Nikaia “nucleus”. The killer, Roupakias, had earlier been appointed to the Nikaia five-member council “without elections [Legacy](#) or nothing”.

The Nikaia Attack Battalion had been involved in several attacks on migrant workers and also the attack on KKE Communist party members in Perama a short time previously.

The informant finally walked away from Golden Dawn “because of the thefts and thuggeries. Being a nationalist doesn’t mean I kill someone.” He cites occasions when police sympathetic to Golden Dawn help them when they are arrested for violence.

The informant describes how former and dissident Golden Dawn members have their Facebook sites hacked and material wiped. He states that members are indoctrinated in Nazi ideology and described the young people in the “Centaur” youth movement and “Innova” motor-scooter squads (named after the scooter brand).

Following revelations of this sort and in the middle of a growing wave of indignant protests, on Monday 23 September the Greek government announced the resignation (actually sacking) of two Police Generals, inspector-general of police for southern Greece Lieutenant General Yiannis Dikopoulos and general police director of Central Greece Apostolos Kaskanis. Seven other police officers were suspended for alleged links with Golden Dawn.

As the BBC's Mark Lowen reported: "There have long been claims of widespread support for the neo-Nazis, included figures showing that in some areas one in two police officers voted for them in last year's election."

Prime Minister Antonis Samaras vowed that he would not allow Golden Dawn to "undermine" democracy: not bad for a man who was "elected" to his position by a Greek people with a Trioka pistol at their heads!

Meanwhile Golden Dawn denied any involvement in the killing of Fyssas. On 25 September, leader Nikos Michaloliakos warned that "mud-slinging and slander" would "open the gates of hell". (This was always the public line of fascist and Nazi [cheap nba jerseys](#) parties: "We are not violent thugs and we will kill anyone who dares say we are!")

Golden Dawn claimed that the media were behind a "dirty war" to annihilate it and denounced Britain's Guardian newspaper as "the newspaper of capitalists in the City" (of London) for inciting violence against the group. Golden Dawn's online statement talked about "the role of certain embassies in the entire operation to dismantle" their organisation.

That same day, 25 September, support for Golden Dawn was reported to be plummeting by 4 percentage points, down from 10% in opinion polls. Newspapers reported that judicial authorities had indicated they would investigate whether Golden Dawn acted as a criminal neo-Nazi organisation, and reported that at least five major leaders of the group would be charged in conjunction with Fyssas' murder. Public order minister Nikos Dendias said he had sent the Supreme Court evidence of Golden Dawn involvement in more than 150 incidents

of attacks on immigrants, leftists and trade unionists dating back to 1992. Human rights organisations have linked the group to over 300 attacks, mainly on migrants, in the last three years.

Heavy pressure from Brussels

The "Guardian" added to an online report on 25 September that: "Greece has come under heavy pressure from Brussels to clamp down on the openly racist party, with several Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and other officials expressing doubt over whether the country should be allowed to assume the rotating presidency of the EU in January if it fails to do so."

The next day a posting appeared on a blog maintained by the "Special Forces Reserve Union" (KEED). This 26 September posting called for [cheap mlb jerseys](#) the government to resign [site](#) and for Greece to withdraw from the draconian Memoranda agreements which imposed appalling austerity measures on the country in return for "rescue" packages. It demanded that those responsible for Greece's financial crisis should be hauled in front of "Special Courts" and that all German business, personal and state property in Greece should be impounded to pay reparations Germany owes arising from World War II.

Listing a number of acts of negligence on the part of the government, the posting called for the armed forces to assume control of the country as the only institution which could secure all the demands it made.

The reservists said a "government of national unity" should be installed, chaired by the President of the Supreme Court and to include "proven personalities with no political links". They demanded immediate suspension of the Memorandums, the banning from office of all politicians currently in government, all [Build](#) immigrants to be immediately be shipped out of the country, and that the armed forces along with the security forces should take over Greece.

(Anger in Greece's officer caste has been simmering. Last April GreeceReporter website reported that Greece's military

were smarting under their inability to keep up with Turkey's armed forces.

“The military isn't just bleeding – it's boiling”, Hellenic Navy officer Yannis Katsaroulis said in an interview with Germany's Deutsche Welle. ... “We recently met with the defence minister to voice our anger about the cuts and one of us, a brigadier, piped up and said we are all set on voting for Golden Dawn in the next elections”, he said. Katsaroulis added: “Don't be surprised if tanks roll out onto the street and a military rebellion occurs. Everything is possible at this point”.’)

On Friday 27 September Golden Dawn was still toughing it out in the face of continually mounting opposition. Leader Nikolaos Michaloliakos warned that the party could well pull its MPs out of Parliament unless the government crackdown ceased. If they resigned, there would have to be special elections in the constituencies they represented, which could well let in opposition candidates who would overturn the government's slender majority. But Deputy Prime Minister Evangelos Venizelos was unperturbed, describing the move as “not a threat. It's a great opportunity”, and prosecutors investigating Golden Dawn said they had found evidence that would help them to prove that it is a criminal organisation.

The following day, Saturday 28 September, Greek police arrested Michaloliakos on charges of forming a criminal organisation, along with party spokesperson Ilias Kasidiaris and fellow MPs Ilias Panayiotaros and Ioannis Lagos and 12 other party members. The arrests were made by masked officers of the anti-terrorism unit.

A serving police officer who reportedly acts as a bodyguard for the party had also been arrested.

Many commentators were first of all surprised by these measures on the part of the government. This is the first time since the collapse of the military dictatorship in the 1970s that a party leader has been arrested. Also the government and the state have shown amazing tolerance of Golden Dawn since it made big election gains last summer and has risen in the

opinion polls.

Among the thousands and thousands of anti-fascists who have spent the last ten days organising demonstrations and rallies against Golden Dawn there is of course huge relief and a feeling of a hard-won success at this crack-down. At last the state is using some of its resources at least to bear down on a violent criminal neo-Nazi group.

But some commentators – like the Guardian's Helena Smith and (UK) Channel Four's Paul [new](#) Mason – talk much more guardedly about Greece entering “uncharted waters”, and the arrests “fuelling” the political crisis in Greece.

None of the circumstances and conditions which have led to the growth of Golden Dawn have gone away.

The exposure of Golden Dawn's structure and methods is a double-edged sword. It can excite and attract the dispossessed and the demoralised as much as it repels those who trust the rule of law.

The government that is cracking down on them is obliged to carry out a further series of attacks on the Greek people while maintaining the misery already inflicted on them.

It may not take fascism in Greece ten years to get from dress rehearsal to premiere.

It must also be remembered that Greece's fate is totally an issue for the whole of Europe. A victory for fascism in Greece (arising out of the conditions imposed by the crisis) will strengthen reaction across Europe, just as a victory of the working class and the masses which makes big inroads into the privileges of the ruling class will assist in a continent-wide awakening of the working class and working people.

More than ever, a continent-wide movement of working people to assert their rights is an urgent necessity.

Bob Archer, October 2013