

## **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 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, 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 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 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 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](http://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 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 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 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 the government to resign and for Greece to withdraw from the draconian Memorandum 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 immigrants to be immediately 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”. 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 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*

---

## **After the assassination of P. Fyssas: Either we crush fascism or it will crush us**

**Statement by Kokkino (Red) after the assassination of Pavlos Fyssas by Golden Dawn neo-Nazis, 18 Sept. 2013**

The cold-blooded killing of 32-year-old Pavlos Fyssas by Golden Dawn neo-Nazis opens a completely new period in the fascists’ activities. Following the criminal attack on members of the Communist Party at Perama<sup>i</sup> a few days previously, the killing of the anti-fascist Pavlos Fyssas is now an open declaration of war by the fascists on the left and the workers’ movement.

Golden Dawn members are no longer content with the logic of Kaiadas<sup>ii</sup>, and targeting the weakest layers in society (migrants, gays, etc.), but are now starting to target their natural enemy: the workers movement, the youth, and the left.

This sudden escalation in fascist violence is neither accidental nor spontaneous, since it emerges in a period of growing strike struggles against the Memoranda, of growth in the influence of the left, and with the government clearly facing a brick wall. In fact, Golden Dawn will clearly aim to crush the workers’ movement and the left in order to show the bosses (the capitalists, bankers and Troika) how useful they can be and gain their full confidence. The army of murderous gangsters elements guided a few a few days ago at Meligaslas by Kasidiaris<sup>iii</sup> is poised to act and prove its usefulness. And its usefulness is not confined to murders and attacks on the left; they are trying over and above that to show the government that it can count on the neo-Nazis to intimidate or destabilise and overthrow a left government. That is what it means when “reputable journalists”

nowadays write and speak about the need for “conservative forces” to co-operate with Golden Dawn in order to avoid a left government.

This sudden escalation should ring alarm bells and mark a decisive turning-point in the anti-fascist struggle of the left and the workers’ movement. We must now understand that anti-fascism is not a secondary front among others and not think that you can automatically fight the fascists simply by struggling against the Memorandums. On the contrary; there will be no turning back austerity and the Memorandums unless the anti-fascist struggle develops in parallel, since the whole basis for the rise in the fascist right is its intention to maintain the status quo and the interests of capital.

First and foremost, we must put an end to any illusions about an institutional confrontation with fascism, either by a coalition of all the whole range of constitutional parties or through the state apparatus. There can be no alliance with forces which not only carry out policies of brutal austerity and racism, which therefore actually strengthens Golden Dawn, but also, many of them, support its terrorist actions against workers’ struggles. Similarly, the anti-fascist struggle cannot be confined to putting pressure on state institutions to get them to do something. The police have been so penetrated by fascists that relying on them for

defence against fascist attacks is not just a bad joke, but a dangerous illusion with painful consequences for the movement and its members.

Meanwhile, the most vital thing is to build a united front against fascism bringing together the forces of the left (Syriza, KKE, ANTARSYA), workers’ organisations, youth movements and anti-fascists with the aim of developing and co-ordinating anti-fascist action everywhere.

Any sectarianism, perceptions of purity, or fatalism must stop now, otherwise there is a serious risk of repeating the mistakes of the past, when the left tried to sort out its differences within the context of the struggle against fascism. Finally, it is necessary to develop self-defence groups in every area and every work-place in order to curb murderous fascist violence and ensure the safety of the movement, migrants and all the victims of neo-Nazi attacks. All such efforts should also have a central co-ordinating body able to guard and secure the main events and activities of the movement.

*Kokkino, Athens, Wednesday 18 September 2013.*

i Shipyard area near Pireus where Golden Dawn is trying to establish trade unions.

ii Kaiadas was a gulf in ancient Sparta where they threw “disabled” babies, criminals and prisoners of war.

iii Golden Dawn Member of Parliament and spokesperson.

---

## **People’s struggle will destroy Memorandums and fascism**

**Alexis Tsipras is the leader of the radical left party, SYRIZA. These are extracts from his speech to the second festival of the Youth Section of SYRIZA:**

“Fury in Greece and abroad is what has lit a fire under the Greek government, which up to now seemed not to understand and was looking forward to collaborating with the neo-Nazis”, Alexis Tsipras emphasised during his speech to the SYRIZA youth section’s second festival.

“You can be quite sure that (Conservative Prime Minister) Mr. Samaras and his colleagues have not changed their minds. They were forced to change tack. And we don’t care, in fact we are glad they did and we celebrate it. It’s a big victory, a victory for democracy, a victory for the anti-fascist movement, a victory for European democracy”, the president of SYRIZA said, at the same time explaining that it would nevertheless take a lot more other measures to eliminate the fascist threat.

“There is a Chinese proverb that when your enemy retreats, you have to chase him down. Fascism will not die on its own, we have to crush it. Because alongside all young people in Greece, we know, we think and we proclaim that our future is not fascism. Our future is neither barbarism nor capitalism. And today the Memorandums are not our future. Our future is to OVERTURN them.”

Tsipras went on to denounce what Antonis Samaras had said the previous day. “Those who made the current regime have got to a point where they see national elections as an enemy, an adversary, a scarecrow for justice and liberty in the country. Mr.

Samaras’ justice can put up with government by decree, with limitations on liberty and basic rights. It can put up with authoritarianism and repression, with immigrants living in fields and with tolerating Nazis. But it cannot put up with elections. According to TV reports, elections are a threat to regularity and stability. There in two words is justice according to Mr. Samaras and the people he represents, which is the greatest, the most brutal, the most barbarous, the most abominable injustice for the majority of Greeks. Their stability is social instability, a disaster for the lives of millions of people, a blind alley for young Greeks.”

In conclusion, the President of SYRIZA emphasised that Greece cannot any longer put up with being governed by people who have led it into a catastrophe. “We are many, and we are growing more every day. The people trust us, not because they have all suddenly turned left, but because we are not like the other liars, hypocrites and egoists. Because we do not look at politics as a career but as a way of changing our destiny and that of the country. Because we dream of a country dominated by liberty, social justice, democratic stability, a sense of perspective, and prestige. Because we have a long history. Our origins lie in the EPON battalions, insurgents, rebels. We are among the most resolute defenders of democracy. So don’t expect us to bend. We have a country. We have values and ideas. We have experience. And we are determined to win”.