

# The danger of fascism in Greece

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As it mounts brutal attacks on the social rights of workers across Europe, the ruling class increasingly resorts to violence and authoritarian methods to suppress popular opposition. In Greece, which the financial aristocracy has targeted to serve as an example of social counterrevolution in Europe, political terror and intimidation have reached a new, ominous level in the form of open state support for the fascist gangs of *Chrysi Avgi* (Golden Dawn).

In Athens, immigrants, homosexuals and left-wing groups face repeated threats and attacks from this organization. Two weeks ago, one such attack was filmed at the performance of a play by American writer Terrence McNally.

The video clip shows Golden Dawn parliamentary deputy Ilias Panagiotaros insulting audience members and actors with racist and homophobic taunts. His thugs hurl stones and other objects, breaking bones and causing serious injuries. Policemen who are present stand idly by.

After being alerted of the attack, the Ministry for Homeland Security did nothing.

Golden Dawn is an openly fascist organisation, recruited mainly from criminal elements and using Nazi symbols. It demands the deportation of all those with an immigrant background and the abolition of parliament. Since it received 6.9 percent of the vote in the May elections, its poll numbers have risen to 14 percent.

The organization has benefited from the collapse of the far-right LAOS party at the end of last year, due to LAOS' participation in a government that carried out EU austerity measures. With support from the police, 50 to 60 percent of whose members reportedly vote for Golden Dawn, its attacks proceed largely unopposed. Several cases have been reported of police officers arresting political opponents of Golden Dawn and torturing them in prison.

This state defence and encouragement of the fascists is tacitly supported by other European Union (EU) governments and institutions, which have also tolerated round-ups of tens of thousands of immigrants by Greek security forces.

The events in Greece are only the sharpest expression of a shift towards authoritarian forms of rule across Europe.

The scenes in Greece today recall the emergence of the fascist movements of the last century and must be taken as a stark warning to the international working class. Until the working class breaks free of the political paralysis imposed by the trade unions and petty-bourgeois "left" parties—which have done everything in their power to block a revolutionary struggle by the workers—the fascists will escalate their attacks and exploit growing social desperation caused by EU austerity measures.

In Italy after World War I, as in Greece today, the state bureaucracy "turned to fascism and provided it with the weapons and other means necessary for its actions against the workers, while assuring their complete impunity," wrote the Italian social democratic author Ignazio Silone.

As in present-day Greece, Italy was riven by deep social contradictions and shaken by massive strikes and protests. In this situation, Mussolini offered the ruling class the services of his fascist thugs to terrorise and repress the working class. His movement gained support and eventually took state power only due to the political paralysis of the working class movement.

The Italian Socialist Party leadership proved incapable of translating its anti-capitalist rhetoric into a struggle for power, and the reformist trade union leadership refused to mobilise a working class ready and willing to fight the fascist gangs.

"The reformists had dampened their powder so long, fearing it could explode, that when they finally did

apply a burning fuse with a trembling hand, the powder did not catch,” Leon Trotsky wrote ten years later, describing the defeat of the general strike against Mussolini in July-August 1922.

The present situation in Europe is even more dramatic than 90 years ago. Broad sections of the working class have repeatedly shown that they are willing to fight, participating again and again in strikes, protests and demonstrations. What is lacking is a political leadership and organisation that can lead the working class in a struggle for power to defend its basic social rights.

Despite historic attacks on the working class, the unions, which in Greece are largely integrated into the state apparatus, have not organised a single effective strike. Each austerity measure and wage cut is discussed and planned in consultation with union leaders, who limit the response to protest actions aimed at demoralising and weakening the workers.

The largest opposition party—the Coalition of the Alternative Left (SYRIZA)—verbally opposes social cuts. However, it does not mobilise the working class against the austerity measures and ties working class opposition to a bankrupt perspective of reforming the EU. SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras has repeatedly stressed that his most important political objective is to ensure that Greece remains in the EU and the institutions of this instrument of the financial oligarchy are strengthened.

As the EU turns ever more clearly toward authoritarian forms of rule, SYRIZA and the other petty-bourgeois parties move further to the right. This can be seen in the support for imperialist wars in Libya and Syria by the New Anti-capitalist Party in France and Germany’s Left Party.

At the same time, these and other pseudo-left organizations seek to bind workers to the trade unions and parties like SYRIZA and the Greek Communist Party (KKE), insisting that workers must conduct their struggle through these bankrupt organisations.

The opposite is the case. As long as workers remain under the influence of these organisations and politically paralysed by them, leaving broad layers of the population that are being economically devastated without hope of a progressive solution to the crisis, the way is open for the fascists to spread their poison.

The struggle against the danger of fascism demands above all a fight against the political influence of these

organisations, which seek to subordinate the working class to the bourgeoisie. The critical issue is the establishment of the political independence of the working class from all sections of the ruling class—liberal and conservative, right-wing and supposedly “left.”

This means the building of a mass socialist movement of the Greek and European working class directed against the EU and all of the capitalist governments. The working class must take power into its own hands and re-order society along rational, democratic and egalitarian lines. This requires above all the construction of a new leadership in the form of a revolutionary working class party.

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