Greek parliament ends state funding for Golden Dawn

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Last week, the Greek parliament decided to stop the public funding of the fascist party Golden Dawn. What the bourgeois parties are celebrating as the defence of democracy is in fact a further step in the strengthening of the state apparatus.

As in Germany and other European countries, all political parties represented in the Greek parliament receive large sums of money from the state. Under conditions where the overwhelming majority of the working population is not organised in any political party, this is the only available way to fund Greece's reactionary bourgeois parties, which have enforced the hated austerity measures of the European Union (EU). After a joint debate on the issue in early 2012, the parliamentary parties have reaffirmed their support for receiving state funding.

Such funding can be stopped by a vote of 151 of the parliament's 300 deputies, however, if the party leadership or a fifth of its members is under investigation for setting up a criminal organisation.

Since the end of September, several members of Golden Dawn have been under investigation.

The resolution against Golden Dawn passed on October 22 was supported by both parties in the ruling coalition, New Democracy (ND) and the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), as well as the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), the largest opposition party. Some 235 of the 269 deputies present voted in favour of the proposal.

The right-wing populist Independent Greeks party (ANEL), the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and one SYRIZA deputy abstained, withholding a total of 34 votes.

Golden Dawn has also benefited considerably from state financing since its entry into parliament in the summer of 2012. According to the *New York Times*, it received €500,000 from the state and invested a further €200,000 from deputies' salaries to build up the party. The lion's share of its funds comes from other sources, however.

An additional sum of at least €2 million has flowed into the party coffers. It is no secret that Golden Dawn is financed by big business. The government knows all the names and details about the donors but keeps this information secret.

The government is currently adopting anti-fascist rhetoric in an attempt to conceal how its policies have boosted right-wing forces in recent years. Sections of the state apparatus such as the army and police are tightly interwoven with Golden Dawn.

The parliament's resolution has absolutely nothing to do with a fight against fascism. Instead, it shows how the parties are closing ranks in order to build up the state apparatus and strengthen it against opposition from the workers.

Interior Minister Ioannis Michelakis described the amendment as amounting to "elementary measures to protect the country against all who plot against democracy, public order and social peace".

He stressed the importance of concerted action with SYRIZA. "When the harmonious and smooth functioning of democracy is at stake, we must fight together", he said, adding: "The unanimous adoption of the amendment can be an important step in this direction".

Such remarks underscore how SYRIZA and the ruling party are using the state's limited crackdown on Golden Dawn as an opportunity to solidify a political alliance based on support for EU austerity and directed against the working class.

The legal machinery for cutting off state funding to a party itself invites provocations against political parties and against the general population. A simple decision by the public prosecutor to launch an investigation justifies a cut-off of funding, and no evidence against deputies or party leaders need be produced.

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Above all, it is linked to the so-called anti-terror law, laid down in Article 187 of the Criminal Code in 2002. Golden Dawn was indicted on these grounds. Articles 187 (“Criminal organisation”) and 187A (“Terrorist activities”) are sections of the chapter titled “Threats to Public Order”.

Crimes such as murder, serious bodily harm, kidnapping, serious damage to property and disruption of transport security are described as “terrorist activities” if they “are perpetrated under such conditions that they seriously damage the country or an international organisation,...or intend to seriously damage or destroy the basic legal, political and economic structures of a country or international organisation”.

This law was modified in 2010 to create a pseudo-legal basis for the criminalisation of strikes and demonstrations. As the *Eleftherotypia* newspaper reported, significant changes to Article 187 were hurriedly pushed through the sparsely attended parliament during the summer holidays and not made public until months later.

Offences undertaken with the aim of protecting democracy and freedom or the exercise of political and trade union freedoms were explicitly excluded from category of “terrorist” crimes until 2010. But the relevant Paragraph 8, which codified this legislation, was deleted. The destruction of property or serious bodily harm occurring at a demonstration, for example, can now be treated by law as terrorist activity.

This anti-terrorism law has now been implicitly endorsed by SYRIZA. It has repeatedly appealed to the state in recent months, calling for all parties to discuss joint action against Golden Dawn. SYRIZA also provides a cover for the fascists’ major financiers and strengthens the undemocratic structures of the state apparatus.

The organisation’s support for the amendment makes clear that SYRIZA will be a major accomplice of the government in the coming attacks on the Greek population.

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