

Pseudo-left promotes dangerous illusions following criminal conviction of Greek fascists

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Greece's supreme court ruled earlier this month that the neo-fascist party Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn) was a criminal organisation, and convicted almost all 68 members who were on trial on charges including violence, membership in a criminal organisation, grievous bodily harm, and illegal possession of weapons. The trial against Chrysi Avgi lasted over five years, and its outcome was awaited with great anticipation.

The court announced the sentencing for those convicted yesterday. Party leader Nikos Michaloliakos, a Hitler admirer and Holocaust denier, was sentenced to 13 years in prison. Another 17 parliamentary deputies and members were handed sentences of between five and 13 years. Giorgos Roupakias was sentenced to life imprisonment. The party supporter admitted to having stabbed to death anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas in 2013. Other party members were sentenced to between six and seven years as accomplices to the murder. Over the coming days, rulings will be made on whether some of the sentences should be suspended.

Prior to the announcement of the ruling on October 7, more than 20,000 people gathered outside the court in central Athens and celebrated the decision, among them the mother of Fyssas and former Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras (Syriza—the Coalition of the Radical Left). Ever since, numerous pseudo-left organisations have sought to present the decision as a tremendous victory over fascism.

Syriza, the former governing party, described it as "a significant milestone, a breakthrough and a new departure point for the struggles ahead of us."

Workers Solidarity, the newspaper of the Greek section of the International Socialist Tendency, said the ruling was a "critical juncture for the struggles of the working class." Even the camp of the right-wing New Democracy government "was forced to yield before this current" of anti-fascism. Former New Democracy Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, "who orchestrated the racist campaign jointly waged by the Greek police and Golden Dawn, now declares himself an anti-fascist." Kyriakos Mitsotakis, his successor,

"who praised the rallies for Macedonia alongside Golden Dawn, is now after anti-fascist trophies."

The OKDE-Spartakos group celebrated the ruling on the Pabloite website *International Viewpoint*, writing, "Tens of thousands of workers, members of trade unions and political organizations, unemployed, immigrants, youth, antifascists, erected a wall against fascist barbarism and put an end to a historic cycle, sending the Golden Dawn and its offshoots in prison and in the junk of history ... Mitsotakis' government, like Samaras' government before it, was forced to sever its blood ties with the Nazis and drag them to court under the weight of the massive and multiform antifascist struggle."

These assessments are not only naive, but politically criminal. They disarm the working class in the face of the fascist threat that has by no means been banished following the ruling against Chrysi Avgi. Samaras and Mitsotakis have not transformed themselves into anti-fascists and broken "blood ties with the Nazis," but have rather embraced their policies.

After years in which ostensibly "left" and right-wing Greek governments plundered the Greek population to enrich the international banks and Greek oligarchs, the country confronts its worst economic crisis in decades. This has been dramatically worsened by the coronavirus pandemic. The government has responded by adopting the methods of Chrysi Avgi: it is stoking nationalism, abusing refugees, and preparing a war against arch-rival Turkey, which will endanger the lives of thousands of young soldiers.

The growth of fascist movements around the world, from the United States to Brazil, the Philippines, Germany, Italy, Hungary, and elsewhere, underscores that class tensions have reached such a high level that they can no longer be covered over by democratic means. Facing mounting opposition to poverty, militarism, and the catastrophic consequences of their coronavirus policy, the ruling class is promoting and encouraging fascist gangs everywhere in order to establish dictatorial forms of rule.

If the Hitler admirer Michaloliakos and his closest

associates must now spend several years behind bars, after they were given state sanction to assault refugees, terrorise workers, and murder left-wing activists, this is above all for tactical reasons. The government fears that the mounting opposition towards the Nazis could become a threat to bourgeois rule itself.

The decision to let their fascist bloodhounds loose against workers and immigrants, keep them on a tight leash to intimidate opposition, or temporarily detain them has always been a tactical consideration for the ruling class based solely on considerations of expediency. In Germany, the SA, the paramilitary arm of the Nazis, was banned as late as April 1932 because there was a risk that an armed confrontation with the working class would have resulted in the victory of the workers. Just nine months later, the ruling class entrusted Hitler with the leadership of the government and granted him dictatorial powers.

Historical experience testifies to the fact that fascism has deep roots in Greek politics. From the collaboration with the Nazi occupation, to the dictatorship of the colonels between 1967 and 1974, and the inclusion of the Volkish-nationalist L.A.O.S. party in the European Union-backed technocratic government in 2011, right-wing extremist groups have repeatedly played a leading role.

There are several aspirants in Greece today who could follow in the footsteps of Chrysi Avgi if their leaders are not set free for some time. According to a police report leaked to the public last week, some 16 right-wing extremist groups are seeking to fill the void left by Chrysi Avgi. One of them, Elliniki Lysi (Greek Solution), already has 10 deputies in the Greek parliament. A split-off from Chrysi Avgi, Greeks for the Fatherland, founded by the party's former spokesman Ilias Kasidiaris in June, is also obtaining support of between 1.5 and 3 percent in the polls.

The fascists enjoy a particularly strong base of support within the state apparatus. In 2012, 23 percent of all police officers voted for the fascists, compared to 7 percent in the population as a whole. The attitude of the security forces was shown once again following the court ruling, when armed police from the special forces unit drove the celebrating protesters away from the court building with water cannon, tear gas, and batons.

Syriza and the pseudo-left groups now celebrating the court decision as a victory have themselves contributed significantly to the strengthening of the far-right, and are continuing to do so. They are concealing the fascist threat from the population because, as representatives of privileged sections of the middle class, they defend capitalist rule, which can only be maintained through authoritarian measures.

With their nationalist and anti-worker policies, the social

democratic Pasok and, following its collapse, Syriza, paved the way for the resurrection of far-right forces, which were totally discredited following the overthrow of the military dictatorship. The pseudo-left organisations in their orbit either covered up these policies or openly supported them.

Chrysi Avgi emerged in the 1990s when the Pasok government of the day waged a reactionary nationalist campaign against Macedonia and restructured the Greek economy at the expense of the working class. Michaloliakos, who has now been convicted, worked at the time for the Greek intelligence agency.

Chrysi Avgi reached the high-point of its influence in 2015, under the Syriza government of Tsipras, when it obtained 7 percent of the vote and became the third largest party. They secured 18 deputies in the 300-seat parliament by exploiting widespread social anger towards the EU-dictated austerity policies and corruption within the state apparatus.

Syriza won the parliamentary elections in January 2015 by promising an end to EU austerity. But Tsipras formed a coalition with the far-right Independent Greeks (Anel), intensified the austerity drive, and ultimately paved the way for the return to power of New Democracy, which has largely adopted the programme of the fascists.

The fascists do not yet have a mass movement, but the danger that they can increase their influence is very great if they are not combatted by an independent political movement of the working class. This requires a complete break from Syriza and its pseudo-left periphery, and the building of a party that unites the working class as the leading social force of all oppressed layers behind a socialist and internationalist programme. This requires the building of a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Greece.



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