

The Resistible Rise of Golden Dawn

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The meteoric electoral ascension of the Nazi party Golden Dawn in Greece sent shockwaves all over Europe. Up from the marginal 0.29% it polled in the elections of 2009, Golden Dawn gathered just under 7% in the national elections of May and June 2012 sending 18 Nazi MPs to the Greek parliament. This, combined with the fact of Nazi squads operating in neighbourhoods, with repeated organized attacks, some of them murderous, on migrants, trade unionists, gays and activists of the Left, raised the spectre of the threat of fascism in a way that had not been the case for decades.



Golden Dawn; 'straight out of the sewers of history'

Golden Dawn does not resemble what used to be called Euro-fascism; they are not fascists with 'suits and ties', they are not ex-fascists masquerading as populists. They come straight out of the sewers of history; their leadership have been consistent Hitler admirers for decades. They are not Holocaust deniers but Holocaust nostalgics, openly racist, calling for the annihilation of the 'inferior races'. Their 'alternative history' model dreams of Greece having joined the Nazi Axis in World War 2 and ensured the establishment of the Third Reich. In the 'art' section of their publications, along with poems dedicated to the leaders of the German Nazi party, one could find also hymns to Satan and black-metal music targeting Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and anything having to do

with what they called 'Judeo-Christian tradition'.¹ Their sub-culture worships hate, 'pure blood', violence, guns, and martial arts. Their annual youth festival was called 'Festival of Hate'. Their internal regime is not one of a political party; their para-military apparatus with their members following orders from superiors up to the level of the 'Führer, Nikos Michaloliakos, has been much more important than their political faade. Their public appearances echo the German Nazi Party with torches, dark uniforms, and goose stepping. In their internal procedures and their publications they have been using the swastika, while their members enjoy using the fascist salute. In their local chapters they have been practicing street fighting, arms use, and stabbing. Apart from these details, the majority of their local chapters form part of local criminal networks selling protection to bars, cabarets and brothels, and - most important of all- have been acting as local gangs attacking migrants in buses, in the streets, in their houses, stealing, beating up, humiliating and murdering.

I felt forced to provide all this information, not because in itself gives us any clue about the factors leading to Golden Dawn's appearance nor about the way to defeat them. But they are proof of the scale of the political crisis and the speed with which things can change because of the acute economic crisis. This is the kind of party that that has intervened in the political scene, and which, according to many polls², may be the third largest party after the next elections. The destabilizing effects of the crisis are something that we all have to take into account, in whichever country we may live. Greece is not an exception; on the contrary it can be a warning.

Actually, there have been many voices inside Greece, even in the last years while Golden Dawn was already developing as a political phenomenon, saying that fascism would

¹One of these black-metal 'artists' is now a Golden Dawn MP, Giorgos Germanis.

²We should be sceptical of these polls, for reasons I will explain later.

never be able to get out of the margins in this country. They put forward a number of arguments: the experience of Greece as an occupied country during the war; the important anti-fascist tradition of the '40s (Greece experienced the most important general strike under the German occupation, a strike that managed to stop the conscription of Greek workers as forced labour in Germany); the recent experience of the military dictatorship of 1967-1974, the living memory of mass emigration which was supposed to make the Greeks immune to racism, etc. All these have been important factors in the trajectory of fascism and anti-fascism, but as is now obvious they didn't stop Golden Dawn from seizing the opportunity of the economic crisis to make its mark on the political scene.

In order to see how and why, we have to examine the specific way the economic crisis made the political system implode in the last years, providing the space for Golden Dawn. Nevertheless, it's important to note that tradition does matter, and despite the 'national myths', fascists have been present in Greece for almost a century and in crucial periods they were not just 'in the margins'. Anyway, they were not born ex nihilo during the present crisis.

Even during the 1920s, there were cases of proto-fascist organizations, connected with politicians of the big parties of that period who were looking to the example of Mussolini as a way to cope with the rising radicalization of the workers movement and of the Greek refugees who had come to Greece after the collapse of the allied intervention in Turkey. In 1936, a fascist politician, Ioannis Metaxas, became prime minister and very quickly dictator, establishing a regime copying many of the rituals of Nazism. Fascist organisations were implanted among the youth and in the workplaces while all the genuine workers organizations and parties were disbanded. Ironically, history brought that regime - with its open inclination to German fascism - into World War 2 on the Allied side. This was because Greek capitalism's integration in West European imperialism was far more important than the

ideological affiliations of the government.

After the German invasion, though, a big part of the Greek ruling class moved to collaborating with the occupation forces and doing business with the Third Reich. During this period of collaboration, the Greek government created the 'Security Battalions', armed groups aiming to suppress the Resistance (by far the most important organization of which was the National Liberation Front (EAM), controlled by the Communist Party). The Security Battalions recruited what Trotsky called 'human dust': people who were eager to kill and betray just for some pocket-money provided by the government or the Nazis. Along with them, in parts of the country, more openly pro-German or clear Nazi organizations appear, having anti-communism as the central tenet of their 'ideology'. In local massacres committed by the occupation forces around the country - in some cases entire villages were annihilated after some act of the Resistance - it was these fascist groups who did the dirty work. The Germans in most of the cases were acting as soldiers. Torturing, rape, burning or burying alive people was a 'privilege' for the Greek fascists.

However, the Resistance triumphed and while the Germans were evacuating the country, their Greek friends threw away their uniforms and tried to hide (many of them didn't have the chance), while a few of them followed the Nazi army into exile. For a short period after the Liberation and before the official outbreak of the Civil War (1946-1949), the 'collaborators' were prosecuted and vilified. The Greek ruling class, though, discovered very quickly that they were in need of these people again. Fascist gangs started a campaign of terror against the Left round the country, under the protection of the local police. During the Civil War, they were given free rein in the countryside. The collaborators in a few years were rebranded as 'patriots' who saved the country from Communism, gaining recognition and benefits from the state, while the Left had to go under-

ground.³

These groups survived as ‘clubs’ in parts of the country and were re-activated in the early ’60s, when the ruling class was surprised to see a new upsurge of the Left, student and labor activism. Costa Gavras’ film ‘Z’, depicted the most famous case : the murder of Grigoris Lambrakis, MP for the United Democratic Left (the electoral front of the underground Communist Party) after one of his speeches in Salonica, in 1963. The fascist groups were used by the police and the Right to intimidate gatherings of the Left and the unions, organizing counter demonstrations, appearing as ‘concerned citizens’. These fascist networks formed part of what in Greek political vocabulary was called the ‘para-state’, a nexus connecting the Palace, secret services, the gendarmerie, politicians and the fascist groups; at the service of the ruling class but running parallel to the official state. This nexus had a strong hold inside the army. In April 1967 that ‘official’ part of the para-state, the junta of colonels, took power to push through with full-force the campaign against the Left and the workers’ movement.

The small group of leaders of the dictatorship went to jail in 1975 but a whole layer of cadre remained untouched. Torturers, cops, military, judges, advisers and ministers either stayed in their positions or just went home as if nothing had happened. In late 1976, at the funeral of an arch-torturer during the dictatorship, some of these ‘remnants’ made their appearance -shouting fascist slogans and attacking journalists. Among those bullies was Nikos Michaloliakos, a young cadre of the ‘4th of August’⁴ organization, founded by one of the most openly Nazi-inclined ‘intellectuals’

of the dictatorship, Kostas Plevris⁵. Michaloliakos was arrested and went to jail, but not for long. He was to go to jail again some years later, after being arrested for having explosives. His connections with the secret services (some of his fellow fascists who remained in jail for years have spoken out) enabled him to go free again very quickly.

The fascist terrorism of the first years of the 3rd Greek Republic became an insignificant footnote for official history. But those were the years when Michaloliakos and other nostalgics were putting bombs in offices of the left, in cinemas playing Russian movies and in bookshops. Retired officers compiled personal arsenals, around which they built neo-fascist groups. They were not just nostalgics. The recently opened British Foreign Office files showed that the British Embassy was afraid of a new military coup in Greece even until 1980. The rising workers movement managed to drive all these neo-fascist groups and their military supporters to the margins. They were forced to set aside the guns and the bombs, and in 1984 they were regrouped in EPEN (National Political Union), a party founded on the orders of the imprisoned deposed dictators. Michaloliakos, who had already founded a group called Golden Dawn in the beginning of the ’80s, became the leader of the EPEN youth⁶. EPEN had its best result in the Euro-elections of 1984, with 2.3% of the vote and electing one MEP. In the following years, New Democracy was able to gather the majority of these remnants, and EPEN disappeared. Michaloliakos was quickly replaced as Youth leader, and he returned to his openly neo-Nazi ‘Golden Dawn’ project.⁷

Before their recent successes, there had

³The affinities with Golden Dawn are not only ideological. Many of its cadres have family connections with these collaborationist and anti-Communist groups of the 40s, including its most well-known leaders: Michaloliakos, Kasidiaris etc.

⁴Taking its name from the proclamation date of the dictatorship of 1936.

⁵Today Plevris is in LAOS (Popular Orthodox Party), while his son, Thanos Plevris, has left LAOS to join New Democracy.

⁶He had met personally the dictators in prison.

⁷I won’t tire the English reader with footnotes from Greek sources. The best published books, from which I have crosschecked the facts on the history of Golden Dawn, are Dimitris Psarras, *Black Bible of Golden Dawn*, Polis, Athens, 2012 [in Greek] and Giorgos Pittas & Katerina Thoidou, *The Golden Dawn File*, Marxistiko Vivliopoleio, Athens, 2013 [in Greek].

been three failed attempts by Golden Dawn to emerge into the mainstream. This experience is important both for the way they managed to make steps forward and for the way they were blocked. Their first attempt was in the early 90s, rebranding themselves as ‘Greek Nationalists’, and trying to take advantage of the nationalist fever cultivated by the government, because of the tensions with the Republic of Macedonia. The collapse of state capitalism in Eastern Europe and the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia, made Greek capitalism very greedy for a big share of the Balkan market. This was accompanied by an ideological campaign and nationalist demonstrations organized with the support of the Church and semi-obligatory participation of school students. In those ‘demos’ Golden Dawners made their first public appearance and recruited some youth, trying to create combat groups to attack left-wing school colleagues. Their attempt failed having crashed on two counter-forces. On the one hand, the movement of school occupations managed to bring down a series of Ministers of Education and, combined with the workers’ resistance, overthrew the neo-liberal government of New Democracy in October 1993. Golden Dawn could not find space in this radicalized milieu. At the same time, the intervention of the Left was able to show that nationalism was part-and-parcel of the neo-liberal attack. The Union of Bus Workers that was central to overthrowing the government was also an official supporter of the Socialist Revolution Organisation⁸ when we were prosecuted for publishing a book supporting the right of the Republic of Macedonia to choose its own name.

The second attempt of Golden Dawn came in the mid-to-late '90s. This time racism was their main tool. The PASOK government had embraced neoliberalism and was attacking basic working class rights, and at the same time was cultivating a wave of racism against migrants, mainly from the Balkans. Police controls, intimidation, deportation, went along with the media targeting migrants as the root of every evil. Golden Dawn tried to make

a public appearance in May Day 1998, after already trying to build some local groups in neighbourhoods of Athens based on attacking left-wing activists and migrants. Again their attempt was blocked through a combination of workers’ resistance and the intervention of revolutionaries. Workers’ resistance didn’t just inhibit the attack, but also created a net of protection for migrants against racism. Teachers’ unions and hospital workers’ unions were the first to take action against racist attempts of the government to exclude migrants from free education and health. At the same time, the counter-demonstrations organized mainly on the initiative of SEK (Socialist Workers Party of Greece) didn’t allow them space in the streets. These two factors came to a head on a single day in June 1998. During a trial of neo-Nazis who had attacked members of SEK, a group of Golden Dawners brutally assaulted a group of left-wing students and education trade unionists who were in the courts for a different trial (resistance to the police during a recent demonstration). One of the victims narrowly avoided death. Among the neo-Nazis was the vice-leader of Golden Dawn, Antonis Androutsopoulos, who went underground for years to avoid arrest. Golden Dawn had to retreat under the massive outcry against them.

The third attempt came in the mid 2000s, again with racism as the spearhead but with Islamophobia giving an extra potential to the neo-Nazi propaganda. The discourse of the clash of civilizations suited a Greek government which was trying at the same time to be part of Bush’s War on terror and to use racism as a divide-and-conquer tactic against the workers’ movement. Golden Dawn endorsed Islamophobia and targeted Afghan, Pakistani and Arab refugees and migrants. But the anti-war movement was the one that determined the situation. Massive majorities expressed themselves against the wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in support of the Palestinians. It was actually through the anti-war movement that communities who were to play a crucial role in the anti-fascist

⁸The organization that later evolved into SEK.

action in the future (the Pakistani community in particular) were radicalized and joined ranks with the Left. The neo-Nazis remained constantly under pressure in the streets. In October 2005, after an attack committed by one of its well-known thugs, a demo reached close to their offices in Athens, and there were shots from shotguns coming from inside the Nazi HQ. Under the fear of the movement -and also feeling the threat that under those circumstances even the police would at last be forced to act against them, Golden Dawn's leadership decided to suspend its action. Golden Dawn then disappeared for two years.

There are some common elements in all these attempts of the neo-Nazis to intervene. First, in all these cases they tried to ride on a wave of reactionary ideology stemming from above - from the government and the ruling class. In all the cases the governments felt happy to see that their ideological campaign was taking a 'movement dimension'; for them it was one more argument to justify the attacks on the working class. At the same time, Golden Dawn had its own separate agenda. They were not just 'playing the game' of the government, but were trying to recruit and organize fascist nuclei in neighbourhoods and schools, on the basis of controlling the streets and street fighting against left-wing activists and migrants. Finally, in all the cases, their attempt failed after coming into collision with the real movement -trade unions, students and the Left - and in no case because of any action of the police or the state.

So what changed and allowed them to get into Parliament? An easy answer is to say that it has been the economic crisis. This is, of course, a crucial parameter but Golden Dawn's rise was not an immediate result. Economic crisis brought fruit to Golden Dawn but only mediated through political actions - actions in most cases coming from the government and the state and to a much lesser extent coming from the fascists themselves. The attempts to interpret the appearance of fascism in pure sociological terms can only reproduce their own cheap arguments. Until recently the

media were trying to convince us that Golden Dawn was a 'natural' product of the threat a big part of the population feels coming from the Muslim migrants. In reality, their electoral results have been quite the same in areas with big migrant populations and in areas with no migrants.

The gloss of a 'charity organization' on Golden Dawn hasn't been anything more than a media fabrication. The infamous photo of a Golden Dawner helping an old lady who 'was afraid of migrants' to go to the bank that hit the front pages a couple of years ago has now been exposed as nothing more than one of their leaders with his own mother! The 'soup kitchens' only for Greeks have been just clumsy photo opportunities out of their offices; nothing to do with any kind of solidarity network. Unfortunately this propaganda had an international impact, because it fitted with a superficial approach saying that the economic crisis and the social polarization by themselves provided roots for the fascists in Greece, leaving totally out of the picture the deliberate intervention of the ruling class to help them make a breakthrough.

What had actually happened was that racism and Islamophobia had been already deeply embedded in the political agenda of both the big political parties. The last years of the government of New Democracy (2004-2009) saw a culmination of racist propaganda and pogrom-like police campaigns against migrants. The fascist arguments were becoming part of the official discourse. After December 2008, the scapegoating of migrants was even more combined with the strengthening of a discourse of 'law and order'. December 2008 was the month of a rebellion that saw massive demonstrations and barricades round the country after the murder of a school-student by a policeman. The Greek ruling class had a glimpse of a revolution and was really scared. The government was to survive for some more months, but a third factor was already also shaping the situation. LAOS (The People's Orthodox Rally), a far-right party, which broke away from New Democracy, was gaining ground. LAOS entered the

parliament in 2007 with 3.8% and jumped to 5.6% in the elections of 2009. In the meantime, they had gained 7.15% in the Euro-elections. LAOS was the bitter fruit of the constant attempts of New Democracy (with PASOK trailing behind) to pull the political agenda towards racism and 'security'.

LAOS needs a special note, because its case shows that the boundaries between fascist and far-right populist parties can be quite blurred. Set-up by a firebrand politician of New Democracy, it was not an openly fascist party, in the sense of attempting to build a reactionary movement from below, or hinting in any way against the democratic system. Nevertheless, its leader, while still being in New Democracy was trying to establish links with the far-right and with the fascists; once he made an open call to Golden Dawn to join New Democracy, offer their 'capabilities' and take a ministry as a reward. Another fascist group, Greek Front, led by Makis Voridis⁹, was integrated in LAOS. LAOS's youth section was under the control of the fascist groups. The ideological tango went like this: New Democracy was fueling racism, islamophobia and fear, LAOS was gaining ground, the government was using LAOS's 'success' as a justification for moving more to the right, with PASOK tailing all this frenzy.

LAOS was advancing, using the reactionary ideas of the ruling class in the crudest form, while at the same time being able to pose as 'against the system'. This trick came to an abrupt end in late 2011, while the Greek state was in the middle of the storm of the debt crisis. PASOK's government, despite being elected with almost 44% could not hold against the pressure of the general strikes. Papandreou resigned as prime minister and an ex governor of the Bank of Greece, Lucas Papademos was called to form a government of 'national unity'. It would be a government -with a banker/technocrat at its head- that would try to push forward the austerity measures showing no remorse towards the unions. PASOK and New Democracy joined as expected. But also the 'anti-systemic' LAOS

joined in. This opened the gates for Golden Dawn to enter the scene. The accumulated populist far-right dynamic had suddenly shattered on the massive unpopularity of austerity. Papademos's government effectively collapsed in three months (officially it survived for six months) after a succession of general strikes. The 'technocrat' instead of overcoming the 'conservatism' of the established political system, as they hoped, actually detonated the beginning of its end. Actually Golden Dawn was just one of the ways this enormous political crisis was expressed. The combined vote of New Democracy and PASOK is a striking indicator (5.7 million votes in 2007, 5.3m in 2009, 2 million in May 2012). The vote of LAOS from the high point of 386 thousand (2009) fell to 97 thousand (June 2012). A party of the Left, SYRIZA, advanced to be the second party in the elections of 2012. It is in the middle of this political earthquake -with the sudden implosion of the two biggest parties since 1981- that one can evaluate the 440 thousand votes of Golden Dawn.

Alas, the agenda of Golden Dawn was not only electoral. Since late 2008 they had established a presence through a 'citizens' committee' in an Athens neighbourhood, Agios Panteleimonas. In the years to come, they would focus efforts on that area, promoting their squads, patrolling the streets against migrants, shutting down the local playground because of 'foreign children' playing there, attacking mosques, not letting activists nor politicians of the Left to campaign. In the meantime, they had made their first electoral success in the local elections of 2010, electing Michaloliakos as a councillor who was threatening to 'turn the whole of Athens into an Agios Panteleimonas'.

Their project was to create similar local groups in neighbourhoods and towns round the country, to frighten activists, migrants and minorities. And they really put this project forward; these last three years have been full of local confrontations, with fascist attacks, attempts to organize local 'parades', to control other squares in Athens through

⁹Voridis was the official contact of Jean-Marie Le Pen in Greece.

replicating ‘citizens’ committees’ etc.

If we fast forward our description to today, we can have a good sense of the balance of forces in this battle. Now the whole picture has changed. Five of the MPs of Golden Dawn are in jail, including its leader, Nikos Michaloliakos. Their attempt to organise demonstrations in support of their jailed leadership has been a total failure. Outside the Police Headquarters, when their ‘Führer’ was in handcuffs, no more than 200 Golden Dawners appeared, failing even to present themselves with their Golden Dawn t-shirts. Many of their local offices have been abandoned. Their annual march of 31st of January has been much smaller than last year’s. Their jailed MPs have denounced Nazism, racism and violence. In Agios Panteleimonas migrants can walk with no fear, the most notorious member of the local fascist ‘committee’ is in jail, while the local police station officers are also being prosecuted.

The turning point came in September 2013, when Pavlos Fyssas, an anti-racist 34 year old musician was stabbed to death by a Golden Dawner in a suburb of Piraeus. Fyssas was attacked first by a ‘battalion’ of Golden Dawn who then stood aside and watched the murder. The police was also near the event and deliberately let the fascists commit their crime. The government was forced to act, pushing some judges to go on with prosecuting Golden Dawn as a criminal organization. The same ministers who were until recently defending Golden Dawn as a legitimate party and refusing to accept the calls of the movement for ‘no platform for the Nazis’ suddenly transformed into anti-fascist ‘vigilantes’.



An explanation that went around the international media after these events was that

the government was afraid of the growth of Golden Dawn and turned against it to inhibit its further advance. It is actually the same argument used by the Nazis themselves: it was supposedly the success of Golden Dawn that caused the backlash against them. The truth is exactly the opposite. It has been the failure of Golden Dawn to serve the agenda of the ruling class and the government that made them clip their wings for the moment. Golden Dawn hasn’t been able to extend the example of Agios Panteleimonas to any other neighbourhood. Not only that, but wherever they tried to do it they provoked radicalization and local anti-fascist activity on a unseen scale. If the government and a part of the ruling class was hoping that the provocations of the fascists would create an ideological disorientation in the working-class movement and would make it easier for racism to divide the struggles, the result has been the opposite. More and more the workers’ movement was fusing with antiracism and antifascism. More cases of struggle against austerity were targeting also ‘the Nazis who support the government’, and more cases of struggle against Golden Dawn were targeting also ‘the government who covers for the Nazis’.

The summer of 2013 leading up to the murder of Pavlos Fyssas has been crucial, because Golden Dawn tried to raise the stakes. It was the first time they attempted to hit directly against the Left and the trade union movement. Some days before the murder of Pavlos Fyssas they had organised a fighting squad of them, armed with sticks and clubs, walking in military formation into the shipyards of Perama. They physically attacked a group of trade unionists of the Communist Party, while shouting slogans against the ‘communist controlled union’. In the past, Golden Dawn had organized attacks against left-wing activists and some provocations in the unions, but never such an open attack against well-known trade unionists while reproducing the calls of the ship-owners who had long been complaining that trade unionism is to blame for the high unemployment in the sector.

Golden Dawn was trying to intervene in a crucial moment of the class struggle. The government had attempted to advance its programme by shutting down the public TV-radio broadcaster in a single day. It was a message to the Troika (IMF, ECB, EU) that the government was still in a position to fight against the stronghold of trade unionism. That attempt backfired. The public TV remained occupied and self-organized by its workers for months and in just a few days the government lost one of the three parties supporting it -the Democratic Left- a party with Eurocommunist origins. The government remained with a marginal majority in the parliament and had lost its single 'left-wing' cover. Two possible strategies appeared inside the ruling party. One called for re-establishing some contacts with the Left and, crucially, with the trade union bureaucracy in order to go on coping with the workers resistance. This was the way they had been able to abort the all-out strike called by the high-school teachers, not through repression but with SYRIZA's trade unionists yielding to calls for stability. The other strategy called for a sharp turn to the right, escalating the civil-war inspired campaign against the left, racist campaigns against migrants, and more police repression. The Golden Dawn leadership decided to intervene in this debate, creating facts on the ground in favour of this second strategy. They were hoping to show to the ruling class that they have the ability to fight against the Left and the unions in a way the normal methods of the government and the police cannot. They miscalculated.

The murder of Pavlos Fyssas generated an immediate explosion of anti-fascist activity. Spontaneous demos erupted not only in the neighbourhoods round the scene of the murder but round the country. Local Golden Dawn offices had to be evacuated. School students joined massively the protests. In a few days the Unions of public sector turned an already called strike into day of anti-fascist action. A march of tens of thousands reached close to the Nazi headquarters in Athens. The government saw the ghost of December 2008

coming back to haunt them, and this time with the possibility of anti-fascist and anti-austerity rage merging. They had to start acting against Golden Dawn in order to save themselves.

The contrast between the sudden electoral advance of Golden Dawn between 2010 and 2012 and the reality of anti-fascist action forcing the government to take action against them in late 2013 cannot be explained through spontaneity. The protests after Pavlos Fyssas's death were spontaneous but they were also a product of consistent anti-fascist initiatives in the last years.

KEERFA (Movement United Against Racism and the Fascist Threat) has been central in this. Initiated by members of SEK, it brought together anti-capitalists, migrant communities, trade unionists, anti-racists and anti-fascists relating to most of the tendencies of the Left. KEERFA tried to put into action the rich tradition of the united front, while at same time being able to cope with the clear lack of will of the leaderships of the two main parties of the Left (Communist Party and SYRIZA) to be involved in anti-fascism. Actually when KEERFA was set up there were open criticisms for both parts of its goals: antiracism and antifascism. The issue of antiracism was considered by part of the Left as disorientating because it supposedly tailed the agenda of the government to shift the agenda from austerity to security. Antifascism was said to be unnecessary because Golden Dawn was still under 0.5%. LAOS was considered just a 'populist' party and exposing its fascist cadre and discourse was considered as a luxury. For good reasons or bad these controversies are now obsolete.

In these years KEERFA has had to organize at several and different levels. Neighbourhood committees to fight against the attempts of fascists to build local groups, mass demonstrations (with 19 January of 2013 being the best example) to show the power of anti-fascism in the streets, anti-racist activity to counter the official propaganda, action in trade-unions not to allow any space for the Nazis, and solidarity work with the migrant

communities against state racism, against fascist attacks or against bosses taking advantage of the situation. These initiatives provided confidence to big layers of activists in order to take action of their own. The examples in the workplaces have been the most impressive. Golden Dawners were trying to find ways to intervene but instead of that they were generating a wall of anti-fascism. In the hospitals, the campaign of 'blood donations only for Greeks' provoked impromptu demos from hospital workers and patients. In the schools, their campaign of recruiting students has led to widespread anti-fascist committees organized by the local unions. In the bus drivers, the only workplace where they had managed to enter officially, gaining seats in the union leadership, they were discredited and marginalized, especially after trying to organize provocations in general strike demonstrations. Over the last year anti-fascism in the workplaces became a movement of its own, with Golden Dawn MPs not even trying to visit workplaces because the unions, even in small factories, were threatening to strike against their presence.

The murder of Pavlos Fyssas just brought all this on-going work to the surface. It also exposed some other hidden truths. First, it showed the level of state complicity in the rise of Golden Dawn; it is revealing that when the government decided to move against the fascists, they had to get rid of a big chunk of the leadership of the police and the secret services. Local police stations in areas where Golden Dawn had a significant presence have been proved to be part of the explanation: police officers were informing the fascists about possible police action and about the initiatives of anti-fascists. Networks connecting Golden Dawn and capitalists were also revealed. The most intriguing has been the case of a ship-owner who had an underground museum of Nazism and tons of guns stored in a warehouse, who was funding Golden Dawn and was also involved in the tabloid papers promoting fascist activity. The parliamentary Left were very slow to wake up to the danger. SYRIZA's central committee not long before

Pavlos Fyssas' murder had made a long statement on the prospects of a left government without a single mention of racism or the fascist threat. They were (and still are) considering political-electoral pacts with nationalist-right breakaways from New Democracy, leaving aside the 'difficult' issues of racism and police repression.

We are far from finished with the fascist threat. The collapse of the political system and the economic melt-down is going deeper. State racism is escalating. New Democracy PM, Samaras is in the forefront of promoting racist policies in the European Union. He didn't find a word of sympathy for the hundreds of refugees drowned close to the Italian island of Lampedusa. His minister of Public Order called the Asian migrants 'inferior culturally'. They are building more fences and concentration camps. The Greek ports police recently deliberately murdered families with small children coming from Afghanistan and Syria. Golden Dawn will go on trying to find ways to take advantage of all this. The trials of the fascists are themselves a gamble. Activists of KEERFA are deeply involved in the court cases, trying to make the legal connections between the many different cases of fascist attacks in neighbourhoods with the official prosecution against the Golden Dawn leadership. The judges and the police are still trying to find ways to present the cases as separate acts of violence and not connected with Golden Dawn as an organization.

Of course the state action cannot, in itself, save us from the Nazis. The difference is that now the anti-fascist movement feels vindicated and confident. Thousands of migrants cheered seeing Michaloliakos in handcuffs. Activists who had faced tough battles in the workplaces could breathe a sigh of relief. United front work can be more effective, since the parliamentary Left has recognized the need of action. The streets are ours and we're going to keep them that way. The 22nd of March, called in an international meeting in Athens, will be an important day of antifascist action in many countries. Fascists and far-right populists are trying to appear

in an organized way in the Euroelections, so as to gain from the desperation created by austerity and the crisis. Golden Dawn was supposed to be their best example. The anti-fascist movement in Greece has the duty and

the opportunity to turn this situation upside down, showing to any prospective imitator of Michaloliakos the way not only to the prison but also into the dustbin of history.