

The Trial of Golden Dawn's Neo-Nazis Has Begun

One of the most important trials in Greece's contemporary political history began on Monday, April 20th at the Three-Member Court of Appeal for Felonies in Korydallos Prisons. We speak, of course, of the trial of Golden Dawn's neo-Nazis.

The court is scheduled to reconvene on Thursday, May 7th in the same venue.

It is a historic juncture. It is the first time that a Nazi organization will be tried in a court of law, even as it remains the third largest party in parliament, with 388,447 voters, and as the current government remains a majority-Left coalition.

Every indictment of crimes committed by Golden Dawners presents a crucial development for the antifascist movement and for its argument against more conservative popular classes who regard Golden Dawn as a "guarantor of law and order".

The atmosphere generated in light of the trial is of particular importance. That is, if it develops into an atmosphere appropriate to the trial of Nazis, whose outcome concerns anyone who has taken a stance in the camp of freedom and the defense of democratic rights.

Society must be persuaded that the organized members of GD do not constitute a legal political party but rather a gang of murderers, thieves, twilight godfathers who, if permitted to walk, will again wreak bloodshed on the streets, and this time it will not be the blood of immigrants alone, but also the blood of antifascist, progressive, left individuals. The worst-case scenario threatens to be their direct or indirect participation in a new and harsher governing body bent on orchestrating the failure or collapse of the current government.

Under normal circumstances, a left government should legislate the outlawing of Nazism/fascism given its instrumentality as an ideological cloak that facilitates the formation of organization whose sole aim is the perpetuation of hatred, the crushing of all democratic liberties, the assassination of hundreds and, finally, the regression of humanity to the cesspool of past eras.

The issue of Golden Dawn's trial must be faced by a unified front, both inside and outside of the courtroom and throughout its duration.

Already, Athens-Piraeus Antifascist Unity have, together with other collectives, announced a rally outside the courtroom on May 7, on which date the trial will resume and the court will announce its decision regarding the appeal for a change of venue.

The formation of Golden Dawn Watch has been another crucial development. An organized Observatory of the trial with international scope and drawing the participation of lawyers, journalists, trade unionists, representatives of antifascist social and migratory collectives etc., it was founded with the purpose of monitoring the progress of the trial and of informing and intervening where necessary.

Would any conviction mark an end to fascism?

Of course not.

The German justice authorities did arrest Hitler after his abortive Munich beer hall putsch in November 1923, when 600 Nazis staged an assault on a gathering of 3000 businessmen and politicians. 2000 armed fascists clashed with the police and the army. Hitler was defeated and arrested. The Völkischer Beobachter (People's Observer), the Party's press organ, was banned from circulation and the National Socialist Party outlawed.

Despite the charge of high treason, Hitler's sentence was merely "a caress." The initial five-year prison sentence was soon commuted to 8 months and a 500 mark fine! During the course of the following years, the state of crisis in Germany would deepen and the Left would find itself unable to take a unified stance against the Nazis, or to offer a feasible program for exiting the crisis.

By the end of January 1933, Hitler was Chancellor; in March of the same year, he won 44% of the German people's vote in the national elections.

Weimar Germany was born on the ruins of the German revolution and following the assassination of its leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. The once mighty German Left found itself torn by divisions and incapable of dealing with the Nazis. It endured for 15 years before giving itself up to Hitler's mob. The leaders of the KPD beamed at Hitler as he spoke to thousands of workers under the offices of one of the most massive Communist Parties in history. They mocked the communist artist, Diego Rivera, who tried to warn them in vain. A few years later they were all dead in the labour camps of the Gestapo and in concentration camps.

Despite his conviction for planting bombs in cinemas showing progressive films and for causing dozens of citizens to be injured, Michaloliakos, too, was imprisoned for a mere few months at the end of the 70s. And in 2012, he was elected MP to the Greek parliament.

Thus, a simple "caress" of a conviction bears no outcome whatsoever.

But a serious conviction will amount to a victory in a war that will continue on better terms for the antifascist movement.

The battle against fascism is a battle against the conditions that give rise to it

The result of the recent parliamentary elections, in which Golden Dawn managed to garner 6.3% of the vote, despite circumstance, emerges as clear indication that Nazism will not be eradicated root and branch in courts of law.

The defeat of Nazism is a matter of concern for the entire labour-popular-antifascist movement.

In order for Nazism/fascism to be defeated, the circumstances that allow for its flourishing must first be eradicated: the marginality and weakness of the Left in providing a persuasive alternative solution, and the resulting pervasion of confusion, blind rage and despair throughout broad social strata led to believe that only an iron fist can render order to chaos.

We are not beginning our work from scratch. The antifascist movement has established rudimentary structures of national breadth. Antifascist committees, city-wide antifascist collaborative enterprises, countless antifascist initiatives of all kinds – all these are achievements to be preserved, better coordinated, and expanded.

This has to provide the groundwork for Left party leaders to finally join the struggle, vigorously and in concert. SYRIZA is the government now and thus should not allow itself to be derailed by its fear of the theory of two extremes. Meanwhile, as long as the Communist Party leadership, blind to the lessons of history, continues its sectarian tactics, the only thing it can hope to achieve is an iteration of the events of Perama on September 12th 2013: the fascists almost killed CP members flyposting in the neighbourhood, and the party responded with a quasi-funereal procession in the area.

For the sake of argument, let us allow the “democratic” Michaloliakos to tell it like it is:

“They haven’t fully comprehended that when we become powerful, we will have no pity. When we become powerful, we will be without mercy. We will get our hands dirty if necessary. We’ll show them. They’ll become acquainted with the meaning of Stormtroopers, of battle, of struggle, of bayonets sharpened on the sidewalk.” (from Michaloliakos’s address at a Golden Dawn demonstration at Thermopylae in front of the statue of Leonidas. The statement is included in Michaloliakos’s case file).

Takis Giannopoulos, *member of Antinazi zone and Athens-Pireaus Antifascist Unity.*