

**ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG**  
**BRUSSELS - ATHENS**

# **GOLDEN DAWN ON TRIAL**

**DIMITRIS PSARRAS**



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**Athens, September 2015**

**DIMITRIS PSARRAS** was born in Athens in 1953. He is a journalist and a member of the Ios (Virus) research team. From 1990 to June 2012 he worked as a journalist for the Greek left-liberal *Eleftherotypia* daily newspaper. Since November 2012, he has been writing for the cooperatively produced *Efimerida ton Syntakton* newspaper.

He has authored the following books (in Greek):

*The Furtive Hand of Karatzaferis: The Resurrection in the Media of Greek Right-Wing Extremism* (Athens: Alexandria, 2010).

*The Black Book of Golden Dawn: Documents From the History and Practice of a National Socialist Group* (Athens: Polis, 2012).

*The Bestseller of Hate: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Greece, 1920–2013* (Athens: Polis, 2013).

His booklet *The Rise of the Neo-Nazi Party 'Golden Dawn' in Greece: Neo-Nazi Mobilisation in the Wake of the Crisis*, was published in German by the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in 2013. The pamphlet has been translated into English, French, Italian and Spanish and is available to download for free on the foundation's website ([goo.gl/f2Gzdl](http://goo.gl/f2Gzdl)).

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In the early hours of 28 September 2013, a coordinated police operation led to the arrest of the leader and several prominent members of the Greek neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, on charges of directing a criminal organisation. Along with a number of his suspected accomplices, the man accused of murdering Pavlos Fyssas had been arrested over the previous days. From that point, with criminal investigations launched against dozens of its members, more information about Golden Dawn began to come to light. Some of those members were remanded pending the investigation, while restrictive measures were imposed on others. The nine-month investigation of Golden Dawn was assigned to two magistrates, Ioanna Klapa and Maria Dimitropoulou. They gathered an immense body of material, which they handed to a prosecutor, Isidoros Dogiakos. He then submitted a proposal to the judicial council of the Athens Appeals Court (hereafter the judicial council) which, in turn, decided which individuals should be indicted. In an indictment (215/2015) issued in February 2015, the judicial council announced that 69 individuals would be tried. In the meantime, the Nazi organisation engaged in an unprecedented offensive against the judicial system, targeting Supreme Court chief prosecutor Efterpi Koutzamani and, in particular, the two investigating magistrates and the prosecutor who took part in the main investigation. Many figures from the Golden Dawn leadership filed applications to be exempted from the criminal investigation being conducted by the magistrates. Their requests were drafted in harsh language, threatening to enact criminal proceedings against the officials tasked with investigating Golden Dawn.

The trial of 69 Golden Dawn suspects began on 20 April 2015. By that point, Golden Dawn's leader and a number of others who had been held on remand, had been released, as the 18-month detention limit had expired.



**A PARTY  
OR  
CRIMINAL  
ORGANISATION?**

**T**he initial prosecutions and arrests of Golden Dawn members were based on the findings of a preliminary investigation conducted by Supreme Court deputy prosecutor Charalambos Vourliotis, on the instruction of Supreme Court chief prosecutor Efterpi Koutzamani. To this day, the leadership of the Nazi organisation claims to be the victim of political persecution, raising as evidence the fact that the wheels of justice were set in motion by a political figure, the then public order and citizen protection minister Nikos Dendias. On 19 September 2013, the latter submitted 32 files on the organisation's activities since August 2012 to the Supreme Court prosecutor. It was, indeed, an unprecedented move, not because it signalled political intervention in the affairs of the judiciary but because it retrospectively shed light on the state's previous leniency towards the Nazi group, which for years had been left to develop its "worldview" unhindered, staging bloody attacks against those it deemed "enemies" or, in its parlance, "subhuman". Initially, these were young leftists, later anti-nationalist "traitors", anarchists and other political radicals and, finally, migrants and refugees, usually Pakistani, Afghan, African or Balkan migrants. Another incident, Golden Dawn's attack on members of the Communist Party-aligned PAME trade union in Perama, would be added to the list of 32 cases of targeted acts of violence that had been provided by the ministry to the preliminary investigation. When magistrates Klapa and Dimitropoulou then began their investigation, dozens of pending cases involving petty and more serious crimes committed by the organisation across the country were incorporated into the case file. The total number of violent incidents grew to more than 100, with the nature of the offences touching on a wide range of articles in the criminal code.

The large trial that began on 20 April 2015 revolves around three cases: the murder of Pavlos Fyssas, the attack on PAME trade unionists and the attack on the home of a number of Egyptian fishermen. Apart from probing these incidents, the trial also seeks to show that Golden Dawn is a criminal organisation. The indictment stresses the

importance of investigating the Nazi composition of the organisation and distinguishes it as the root cause of and motive for its criminal actions: “This ideology of the leaders, supporters and friends of the political party is not in itself criminal. But it has historically (and only historically) deployed violent means to impose its ideological parameters on those opposed to its creed,” it reads.

The indictment maintains that Golden Dawn’s criminality predates its existence as a political party and that the criminal outfit took on the form of a political party as part of its development. The indictment recognises this structural duplicity:

It is evident from details provided in the case file that the prime characteristics of the criminal activities of the organisation, which over time assumed the form of a political party under the name Popular Association–Golden Dawn, were its hierarchical structure, in which its leader, Nikolaos Michaloliakos, functioned as the absolute head. Ranking below him were the party’s MPs, appointed as district leaders, each of whom coordinated violent activities within their own electoral constituency. Beneath them, the so-called cell leaders were responsible for running smaller branch organisations.

Historically, the term “cell leader” [*pyrinarchis*] was the name given to the head of each small group of friends and supporters of the party, i.e., its cells, which then expanded and were upgraded to become local branches, each covering a small geographical area. Since the May 2012 elections, when the criminal organisation, in the guise of a political party, won seats and entered the Greek parliament, each “cell leader” has been directly accountable to the local MP – the so-called “district leader” [*periferiarchis*] – who in turn was accountable to the leadership of the criminal organisation, from which it received orders to carry out whatever criminal act was on the agenda. Its criminal activities aimed at the violent treatment of foreigners, opponents and purported ideological rivals, and by extension at the dissemination and enforcement of its political theories and ideals through the local branches. At all times, senior members of Golden Dawn’s hierarchy directed these activities on the basis of an organised plan executed by units known as hit squads [*tagmata efodou*].



# CONSTITUTIONAL MANOEUVRES

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**FOR YEARS, THE COMMON SENSE PERVADING** the Greek political and judicial system was that Golden Dawn could never be policed and held at bay in its entirety, given the Greek constitution forbids the banning of political parties. As a result, each time a member of Golden Dawn was accused of engaging in criminal violence, the responsible authorities refrained from conducting an extensive investigation into the real motives of the perpetrators. In other words, they avoided acknowledging the criminals as having acted in their capacity as members of a criminal Nazi organisation, for whom violence was not simply a means, but an end in itself. And despite the fact that Golden Dawn's Nazi characteristics were evident to all, it wasn't until 2013 that these characteristics were investigated as the motive for its members' crimes.

Whenever the issue of Golden Dawn's violence was raised in parliament, the relevant justice ministers were content to limit themselves to a verbal condemnation of Nazism, while reiterating the formula that one can only prosecute deeds, and not beliefs. Even after the organisation's spectacular entry into parliament, the public debate questioned the "feasibility" or "effectiveness" of a judicial response. Precious time was lost in this discussion. Meanwhile, in the name of freedom of expression, an organisation in the habit of deploying murderous violence as a means of political domination was permitted to crawl in the margins and, after 2012, into the centre of political life – and it was tolerated in the name of liberty.

One of the rare occasions when the issue of Golden Dawn's criminality raised some concern in parliament was in February 1998. The political system's disquiet in the face of criminal violence committed by a Nazi formation became evident. In response to Left Coalition (Synaspismos) MP Petros Kouvalakis, the socialist Pasok justice minister Evangelos Yiannopoulos

wondered aloud: “Is Golden Dawn an ideology?” Answering himself, he insisted that “Golden Dawn is not an ideology. I have commissioned the staff of my ministry to collect data. It is fascism, pure and simple. And, insofar as it is fascism, it is a murderous act, a murderous ideology levied against the constitution.” But following this accusatory statement, the minister quickly backtracked: “We have to examine the issue. We shouldn’t rush into taking extreme measures, as people might say that in Greece people are persecuted for their ideas.” He concluded: “Let’s investigate it. Political parties [those represented in parliament] should come here. You should table questions to generate a general discussion so that we can settle on a position.”<sup>1</sup> Regretfully, that “general discussion” never took place.

On 16 June 1998, four months after this discussion in parliament, Golden Dawn organised an assault on two student activists, Dimitris Kousouris and Ilias Fotiadis, and a temporary teacher, Yiannis Karabatsolis, outside the Evelpidon courts complex in Athens. Again, there was no reaction. There was no substantial response, not even following the publication, many years later, of the relevant Supreme Court ruling, which acknowledged that the crime had been carried out by ten-member Golden Dawn unit and that the perpetrators:

Having decided to commit premeditated murder ... however ... failed to carry out their homicidal intent because of external obstacles beyond their control.

In other words, as early as 2009, a Supreme Court ruling had acknowledged the relationship between Golden Dawn and the criminal violence of the hit squads. Moreover, the ruling suggested that middle-ranking Golden Dawn leaders conducted their unlawful and criminal practices within an organisational framework and that these were not, as had previously been believed, isolated instances of illegal activity. Nevertheless, it took four more years for the judicial authorities to link these acts to the provisions of article 187 of the criminal code on criminal organisations.

Thus, contrary to the organisation’s claims, it is not the case that the political elite has pushed for the law to be enforced against them. On the contrary, in recent years, politicians have blocked the judiciary from investigating the organisation, as those politicians remained mired in discussions similar to the debate in 1998 mentioned above. Even now, some politicians and political analysts continue to doubt the validity of the judicial investigation into Golden Dawn, which is, at last, taking place.

This political passivity in the face of racist and Nazi violence was long defended with references to the fact that the Greek constitution forbids

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1. Hellenic Parliament, *Official Proceedings*, Plenary, 18 Feb. 1998 ([goo.gl/rPulAL](http://goo.gl/rPulAL), in Greek).

the banning of a political party. This was precisely the reasoning behind Michaloliakos' decision in 1994 to have Golden Dawn run for election every so often. By doing so, his criminal group could disguise itself as a political party and, thus, protect itself from prosecution.

It is true that during the debates on the 1975 constitution, a modified version of which remains in force, a decision was made to reject the original proposal by which

Parties whose activity suggests an inclination to overthrow the free democratic system or to endanger the nation's territorial integrity may be outlawed under article 100 of the current Constitutional Court.

The spokesperson on constitutional issues for the main opposition party, Dimitris Tsatsos, had proposed striking those words from the constitution. Other opposition parties agreed. Eventually, the then government of Constantine Karamanlis joined them. At the time, the centre and left parties were concerned about the issue, for historically explicable reasons; the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) had been legalised only a few months earlier while the subversive forces of the extreme right – including elements that were nostalgic for the junta – had not expressed themselves primarily through a party, preferring armed conspiratorial tactics and the threat of impending coups. The contemporary assumption, then, was that striking down the proposed clause would protect moderates and leftists, and not the extreme right.

The reasoning behind the rejection of the article is of some interest. Voicing his agreement with Tsatsos, Andreas Papandreou argued that prosecutions should limit themselves to acts, rather than scrutinising beliefs. However, Papandreou argued that if a political party stood for the “overthrow of the system of government”, then this was “a criminal offence”. This link between politics and criminality, Pasok's founder continued, was particularly salient for political parties because, by demanding the overthrow of the government, they are attempting it: “If I am a party apparatus, by advocating something, I'm acting on it, because I am a party apparatus.”<sup>2</sup> Papandreou's thinking has clear relevance today.

Thus, in its final version, the new constitution rejected the proposed legal provision for outlawing parties and inserted article 29, paragraph 1 in its place, which states that the establishment and the activity of a political party “must serve the free functioning of the democratic system”. However broadly interpretable this constitutional provision may be, it certainly cannot condone the existence of a Nazi organisation that habitually makes use of hit squads, regardless of what we call it.

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2. Hellenic Parliament, *Official Proceedings*, Plenary, 22 Apr. 1975 (in Greek).

A precedent does exist for dealing with Golden Dawn. The Supreme Court has ruled that fascist parties impede the proper functioning of democracy. According to ruling 4/2007 of 1 September 2007, the first political section of the Supreme Court recognised an individual's right to contest an election but rejected his party name of New Fascism. According to this decision, "the candidate A.D. would be recognised but without the declared name New Fascism because this would be in violation of the provisions of article 37, paragraph 5c of presidential decree 96 of 5 June 2007, in combination with the provision of article 29, paragraph 1 of the constitution".

Presidential decree 96 stipulates that:

The use of the symbols or emblems of the 21 April 1967 dictatorial regime by current political parties is forbidden, as are photographs of persons convicted for their participation in the dictatorship.

Taken together, these two legal standards (of the criminal code and of the constitution), forbid the formation not only of a party that employs the "symbols" of fascism and Nazism, but also of one that openly identifies with fascist and Nazi history.

The country's international commitments reinforce the case for sanctions against Golden Dawn. A report drafted by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which monitors Greece's enforcement of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, is clear:

The Committee recommends that ... the State party concretely ban Neo-Nazi groups from its territory and take more effective measures to promote tolerance towards persons of different ethnic origins.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth noting that this recommendation was made despite the government reassuring the international organisation that there was "no organised Neo-Nazi movement" in Greece.<sup>4</sup> In its assessment of its own level of compliance with CERD standards some months later, the government made no mention of the issue of neo-Nazism, and simply elided discussion of CERD's recommendation. The government's response was drafted on 17 December 2010.<sup>5</sup> By that point, Michaloliakos was already a city councillor in Athens.

3. CERD/C/GRC/CO/16-19, 14 Sept. 2009 ([goo.gl/Lk3jIq](http://goo.gl/Lk3jIq)).

4. CERD/C/SR.1944, 14 Aug. 2009 ([goo.gl/Jfzvkv](http://goo.gl/Jfzvkv)).

5. CERD/C/GRC/CO/16-19/Add.1, 12 Jan. 2011 ([goo.gl/vp6bqN](http://goo.gl/vp6bqN)).

# A FORGOTTEN ARTICLE OF THE CRIMINAL CODE

**SO DEEPLY ROOTED WAS THE ASSUMPTION** that the constitution should extend its protection even to a Nazi organisation that, following the murder of rapper Pavlos Fyssas in September 2013, the government remained unwilling to act decisively. Although the public order minister immediately denounced Golden Dawn, he wanted to put forward for

public debate a proposal for a legislative initiative, aiming at a broader redefinition of article 187 of the [criminal] code on criminal association and of article 195 of the [criminal] code defining what constitutes [the] formation of an armed group.<sup>6</sup>

The prospect of such a “public debate” seemed, at the time, like a distraction. Many observers still harboured bitter memories of the debate on the adoption of the so-called “antiracist law”. Another government initiative, it was envisioned as an antidote to Golden Dawn but it had remained on the backburner for a year and a half (until August 2014). In the meantime, the minister who drafted the bill found that he, along with his Democratic Left party, was no longer part of the coalition government. This new invitation to a “debate” seemed more like a government move to buy time and to ease tensions, rather than a serious attempt at enforcing a law that could curtail Golden Dawn’s activities.

Until Fyssas’ murder, the state authorities – both the police and the justice system – had tacitly tolerated Golden Dawn’s activities. Officials had justified their passive response to the neo-Nazi organisation and its provocations by claiming that its “antisystemic” character could not be countered through legal prosecution. Thus it was deemed preferable for the authorities to turn a blind eye. Another argument put forward was that any attempt to ban Golden Dawn would run against the grain of the constitution which, according to most interpretations, could not permit the outlawing of political parties. As we have seen, while this argument may have been correct,

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6. Statement issued by Nikos Dendias on 18 Sept. 2013 ([goo.gl/lwleWY](http://goo.gl/lwleWY)).

no one was suggesting anything of the sort, not only because a ban would face a constitutional challenge, but also because it would have no practical consequence. By the 1990s, Michaloliakos was content to announce at every opportunity that, should the organisation ever face sanctions, it would simply change its name and continue its activities.

Some legal scholars and human rights organisations had proposed that article 187 of the criminal code be used to indict Golden Dawn's leaders. That article sanctions the prosecution of the leaders of a criminal organisation, recognising them as the instigators of the illegal actions conducted by its members. The position was proposed by Nikos Alivizatos, a constitutional law professor, a year before the Fyssas murder. Responding to a question regarding possible institutional responses to Golden Dawn's actions, Alivizatos argued that "one must consider that the organisation resembles less a political party than a criminal organisation as outlined by article 187 of the criminal code". Therefore

the answer is simple: on a legal level, Golden Dawn can be tackled by ensuring its members (including its MPs) face those punitive measures sanctioned by a number of articles of the criminal code. Whether they are the perpetrators who commit criminal offences or the instigators who plan these offences in their capacity as leaders, Golden Dawners should be treated as common criminals.<sup>7</sup>

This suggestion was important because if Golden Dawn leaders were convicted of leading a criminal organisation, this would carry an additional penalty: the loss of their political rights and their expulsion from parliament. No new legislation was required for this to happen. Golden Dawn officials had already been implicated in a series of criminal incidents; some of these cases had reached the highest courts while many others never made it to trial.

All these case files left no doubt about the organisation's character, its strictly hierarchical (indeed, military) structure, or the leadership's responsibility for the actions of its "phalanx", that is, its hit squads. Although the provisions of the criminal code were not enforced against Golden Dawn until Fyssas' murder, this does not mean they didn't exist. The simple fact was that, until that murder, no one was prepared to apply those provisions. The time had now come.

The 32 case files submitted by the public order ministry to the Supreme Court prosecutor included cases of murder, bodily harm, stabbings, assaults

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7. Nikos Alivizatos, "As common criminals....," *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 5 Nov. 2012 ([goo.gl/Wi6ZSK](http://goo.gl/Wi6ZSK), in Greek). Alivizatos had taken a similar stance in another article, "Can a political party be outlawed?" *Kathimerini*, 23 Sept. 2012 ([goo.gl/EtYNd5](http://goo.gl/EtYNd5), in Greek).

and threats, all involving members of Golden Dawn. In his cover letter, Den-dias noted that

These criminal acts all seem to relate to a criminal organisation and the pursuit of an organised criminal activity [which] goes beyond individual incidents, causes public revulsion, undermines the authority of the rule of law, infringes on human rights and human dignity, and presents a risk to public order and the internal security of the country.<sup>8</sup>

The judiciary was thus faced with a new dilemma. The preceding years had seen the frequent deployment of article 187, paragraph 1 of the criminal code, to ban criminal organisations and participation in them. This was the first time, however, that one such organisation bore the external characteristics of a political party. Moreover, the origins of article 187 raised the question whether it could be used in this case; the article is modelled on paragraph 129 of the German criminal code, and given this law forbids the prohibition of a party that has not been declared unconstitutional (*verfassungswidrig*) by the Federal Constitutional Court, there was speculation as to whether Golden Dawn should be similarly excluded from any ban on account of its constitutional party status. However, in the view of professors Christos Satlanis and Lambros Margaritis, the Greek “provision could never be used as an interpreted criterion to exclude the criminality of any Greek criminal organisation”. Unlike Germany, they stressed, Greece does not possess a constitutional court with the authority to determine the legitimacy of political parties. Consequently, they insisted that it is within the right of the criminal justice system to treat even a political party as a criminal organisation. Indeed, given that the Greek constitution specifies that the establishment of a political party “must serve the free functioning of the democratic system” (article 29, paragraph 1), they argued that any individual who founds a party with the intention of committing crimes is “already in abuse of his rights”.<sup>9</sup>

This view was challenged by a number of lawyers – including Golden Dawn’s own counsel – but also some members of the judicial council, which had drafted the relevant indictment. They insisted that organised criminality requires a financial motive, which should therefore form the focus of any criminal investigation. Implicitly, this claim would mean discounting racism (among other factors) as a potential criminal motive.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection, “References to criminal acts of members of the party Popular Association–Golden Dawn,” no. 3342, 19 Sept. 2013 (in Greek).
  9. Christos Satlanis and Lambros Margaritis, “Can a political party of a political organisation be considered a criminal organisation,” *Criminal Justice* 169 (August–September 2013): 761–766 (in Greek).
  10. Nikos Paraskevopoulos, “The role of financial gain in criminal organisations” (interview with Ada Psarra), *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, 25 Aug. 2014 (in Greek).

# THE PERIANDROS MODEL OR THE FIRST 'CONSPIRACY'

**WE HAVE SEEN THAT THE SUPREME COURT** had, for years, possessed enough evidence to enforce article 187 and ban Golden Dawn as a criminal organisation. The verdict in the case of the attack on Kousouris, Fotiadis and Karabatsolis in June 1998, issued on appeal in 2009, states that the (sole) defendant, Antonis Androutsopoulos (“Periandros”), acted with homicidal intent, as the leader of an organised Golden Dawn unit:

Based on the nature of his physical injuries, together with the way in which they were inflicted, that is, with extreme ferocity and intensity by a number of individuals acting in unison, using thick wooden stakes, the intention of the perpetrators, and thus of the defendant, was, beyond doubt, to kill Dimitris Kousouris, a member of the central council of the National Students Union of Greece (EFEE), on whom they focused the attack, because they considered him the leader of demonstrations by temporary teachers and thus a prime “enemy” of their nationalist ideology.<sup>11</sup>

The wording here is of particular importance in outlining Golden Dawn’s *modus operandi*. The court recognised that Golden Dawn commits crimes and that it is even prepared to murder those whoever it identifies as an ideological “enemy” in defence of its own ideology – which the court describes as “nationalist”, thus drawing on Golden Dawn’s own rhetoric.

This was one element of the verdict that Androutsopoulos challenged. He submitted an appeal to the Supreme Court, in which he claimed that “the group’s motive was presumed merely on the basis of the ideological differences between the two groups”. Androutsopoulos declared:

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11. Minutes and decisions 116, 162, 163/2009 of the 2nd Mixed Jury Appeals Court of Athens. Public sittings on 18 and 24 Feb.; 3, 5, and 12 Mar. 2009 (in Greek).

In the absence of detailed and specific reasoning, I am being condemned because “I was a member” of a group whose ideology differed from that of the victim’s group. In other words, my homicidal intent stemmed from the ideological inclinations of “my group”.

The Supreme Court rejected the appeal, confirming the original verdict. It was the first of its kind to describe the nature of Golden Dawn’s behaviour and the ideological motives that produced its criminal activities.

The court’s decision provided an answer to all those well-meaning commentators who insisted that we should not concern ourselves with the “spirit”, that is, the Nazi composition of the organisation, but with the criminal acts of individuals. It is impossible to understand these crimes if they are viewed in isolation from the organisation’s ideology, or “worldview”, that identifies its enemies as “subhuman”, worthy, even, of physical extermination. Most importantly: the judgment helps to explain why the organisation’s leadership is so quick to deny its Nazi character, even though it expresses its faith in national socialism internally, emphasising that “we will never change”. By denying that its members’ violence was ideologically motivated, Golden Dawn hoped to avoid being seen as a criminal organisation facilitating that violence.

The Periandros case and the Golden Dawn leadership’s response to it shed light on the tricks adopted by the small core around Michaloliakos after the prosecution began in September 2013. When Periandros was identified as one of the perpetrators of the attack on Kousouris, Golden Dawn argued that the accusation was proof of a “conspiracy” and “political persecution” working against it, going so far as to denounce the prosecutor who initiated Periandros’ prosecution, accusing him of acting on political motives:

According to a complaint made in our newspaper, behind the prosecution of our comrade Androutopoulos lies a political intention. It is unacceptable to us that a judicial official should act on the basis of his political convictions. We find it shocking that because someone is a communist, he can press groundless charges against a man simply because he is a nationalist.<sup>12</sup>

Now an accused criminal, Androutopoulos, the deputy leader of Golden Dawn, disappeared and remained in hiding for seven years, during which time he surfaced in the organisation’s press or at its events, where he was revered as a persecuted hero. Golden Dawn’s “theorist” Giorgos Mastoras (the alias of Giorgos Misiakas, who was appointed to a position in parliament at Michaloliakos’ request) honoured Androutopoulos with the title of “Militant National Socialist” in the organisation’s newspaper and greeted

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12. “Open letter to the Greek justice system,” *Golden Dawn*, 4 Dec. 1998 (in Greek).

him “with his right hand raised in the timeless Aryan greeting”.<sup>13</sup> Androutsopoulos himself wrote articles in praise of Hitler, whom he compared to Christ.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the organisation sought to remove any political element from the case, attempting to present it as a simple criminal story. This glaring contradiction was exacerbated after Periandros handed himself into the authorities in early autumn 2005, and reached its climax during his subsequent trial. Contrary to expectations, Periandros’ surrender was accompanied by complete silence on the part of Golden Dawn, and his name wasn’t mentioned once in Golden Dawn’s publications while he was in pretrial custody (13 September 2005–20 September 2006).

During the trial (20, 22 and 25 September 2006), the defence made every effort to remove any political dimension from the case. The only witnesses selected for the defence of the accused “phalanx leader” (*falangarchis*) were two elderly family friends: his parents’ family doctor and a former bishop from South America, who had baptised the defendant in Venezuela four decades earlier. Not a single member of Golden Dawn was called by the defence to defend the theory that the trial involved “political persecution”. Indeed, for the first two days of the trial, even ordinary comrades failed to appear, which lent credence to Michaloliakos’ statement that Golden Dawn had “suspended its activities” in December 2005.

The defendant himself contributed significantly to this tactic of depoliticising his crimes, attempting not only to trivialise his own role within the organisation’s hierarchy, but also to blur his own political identity and opinions to such a degree as to make it believable that he identified with the struggle of temporary teachers supported by Kousouris and his comrades. Of course, all this was directly contradicted by a report published in 1998 in the organisation’s newspaper, three days after the attack:

Among the so-called temporary teachers, who purport to care about the education of the Greek people, are some appalling characters with louse-infested beards, holding black and red flags. Those arrested [on the demonstration of temporary teachers] included builders, unemployed individuals and certain well-known “youths” belonging to the anarchist circles that destroy schools and cause hundreds of millions [of drachmas] worth of damage to university buildings! In fact, this movement represents a coming together of “progressive” forces, extending from the anarchists to the Marxists of Pasok.<sup>15</sup>

13. *Golden Dawn*, 11 Jun. 1999 (in Greek).

14. Periandros Androutsopoulos, “Millennium,” *Golden Dawn*, 7 Jan. 2000 (in Greek).

15. *Golden Dawn*, 19–25 Jun. 1998 (in Greek).

The only evident connection between the defendant and Golden Dawn was in his choice of counsel: the criminal lawyer Panagiotis Michalolias, a prominent member of the far right since the dictatorship and, of course, a brother of the Golden Dawn leader. In this roundabout way, Golden Dawn kept up appearances, intimating the organisation's backing for Periandros, support which, in all other respects, had vanished completely.

Michaloliakos himself didn't even turn up at the courthouse.<sup>16</sup> He limited himself to denouncing the political dimension of the trial and presenting himself as a surrogate defendant. And he only did so once he was free of the risk of being implicated in Periandros' crime in the trial:

This was a trial of ideas and the right thing to do, had they the political honour, would have been to put thousands in the dock, beginning with myself, who signed that article.<sup>17</sup>

The same drama was re-enacted at the appeal. This time, the defence (Panagiotis Michalolias, Theodoros Mantas and Ioannis Iriotis) did not summon any witnesses. Again, the Golden Dawn leadership was conspicuous by its absence, while members who did attend remained silent until the verdict was announced. The defendant himself deployed the "apolitical" tactic, going so far as to congratulate the court for its integrity: "I am satisfied that the court proceedings were not politicised. The court has conducted an exemplary criminal trial." Moreover, he insisted on correcting the transcript of his first trial, in which he had stated "I am not a pacifist". "I didn't say that," Androutsopoulos objected, "I said I'm not a Jehovah [Witness]. That's different. I am a pacifist and do not applaud such acts of violence." The truth is that his words were "I'm not a pacifist Jehovah," but the important point remains that in order to convince the court of his innocence, the "phalanx leader" not only declared himself a pacifist, but even left open the possibility that other Golden Dawn members were involved in the case. The ease with which Golden Dawn members deflect and transfer blame for violence is characteristic of the post-dictatorship extreme right. Michaloliakos himself would write of the climate of "snitchery" that dominated extremist groups in the post-dictatorship period.<sup>18</sup>

16. The irony is that in the trial's early stages, Michaloliakos complained that the investigating magistrates had not summoned him to submit evidence with which to clear his deputy's name. See *Golden Dawn*, 17 Dec. 1998 (in Greek).

17. Nikolaos Michaloliakos, "The trial of Golden Dawn," *Golden Dawn* 606, 5 Oct. 2006 (in Greek).

18. Nikolaos Michaloliakos, *For a greater Greece in a free Europe*, 2nd ed. (Athens: Askalon, 2000), 65–68 (in Greek).

During the first few months in which Androutsopoulos was in hiding, the organisation addressed an “Open letter to the Greek justice system”, which demanded:

That the Greek justice system, in which we have complete confidence, examine the case of Periandros Androutsopoulos, framed as guilty by some disgruntled members [of Golden Dawn], with the collaboration of some journalists.<sup>19</sup>

Following his release, Androutsopoulos accused the Michaloliakos regime inside Golden Dawn of betraying the national movement, and blamed Golden Dawn for a myriad of offenses, many of which reveal illuminating details about the characters who lead the organisation and their practices. Androutsopoulos alleged that “a prominent longstanding member was taken into custody for the shameful charge of paedophilia”; that leading members “flirt publicly with exhibitionist queers, which have led to anti-Greek activities which we have for years been encouraged to attack violently”. He continued that “they were collaborating politically with someone whom, to this day, they refer to as a spy and informant of the KYP [Central Intelligence Service] and whom, during the period of their collaboration, they called leader”. He alleged that “they harboured in their ranks (and continue to do so today) those miscreants who testified against me in 1998, targeting me and conspiring to frame me as guilty!”<sup>20</sup> As for the murderous attack in 1998, in a telephone conversation included in the case file Androutsopoulos identified his comrades Ilias Panagiotaros and Dimitris Zafropoulos as direct physical perpetrators of the crime and named Michaloliakos as its instigator.

This is the model that the Golden Dawn leadership will likely follow over the course of the present criminal proceedings. Already, the group’s leaders have denounced some of their own members, accusing them of suffering from mental disorders. Meanwhile, two former MPs who have been ostracised by the party face allegations that they showed a lack of courage in the face of the enemy and accusations that they were bribed; they are now referred to as “Judases”.

Once again, Golden Dawn views this new “political conspiracy” as a simple “criminal case”. The same model is repeated in the organisation’s dealings with prosecution witnesses, which it views as the most “dangerous”. In 1998, when a complaint was filed against Golden Dawn after Periandros’

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19. *Golden Dawn*, 13 Nov. 1998.

20. “Periandros Androutsopoulos’ message to all nationalists,” [mavroskrinos.blogspot.gr](http://mavroskrinos.blogspot.gr), June 2011 ([goo.gl/Xel9gK](http://goo.gl/Xel9gK), in Greek).

phalanx committed the attack on Kousouris, Fotiadis and Karabatsolis, the organisation published not only the names of the plaintiffs but also those of the prospective witnesses and their addresses. This threatening, intimidating message was published twice.<sup>21</sup> The same thing is happening now. At the beginning of the current trial, which began on 20 April 2015, Golden Dawn made sure to publicise a list of prosecution witnesses, where some were characterised as “anarchists”, “anti-authoritarians” and so on. A number of the organisation’s supporters assaulted two witnesses, friends of Pavlos Fyssas, within walking distance of the courtroom.

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21. “Who is attempting to outlaw Golden Dawn and why?” *Golden Dawn*, 12 and 19 Mar. 1999 (in Greek).



# **A NAZI ORGANISATION IN PARLIAMENT**

**T**he general elections of May and June of 2012 transformed Greece's entire party political framework. For Golden Dawn, the consequences were especially significant. A small organisation that had been operating mainly on the streets found itself suddenly faced with the huge duties that come with being a large parliamentary party. Many members of the organisation who had, until that point, limited themselves to training the organisation's hit squads or to advancing Golden Dawn's cult-like worship of German national socialism, were forced to declare their allegiance to democracy and to play the role of respectable MPs, while continuing to perform the other activities demanded of them by their worldview and their leadership.



# THE LEADER'S DILEMMA



**THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY** (KKE), Aleka Papariga, predicted that once Golden Dawners made it into parliament, “they [would] put on their little ties, turn into super-parliamentarians and become fully integrated”. The dilemma facing the Golden Dawn leadership was whether they would fulfil Papariga’s predictions or whether they would retain their prior organisational form as, above all, a paramilitary group: a national socialist militia.

As we now know, Golden Dawn chose a dual approach. On the one hand, it carefully nurtured its public image as a party just like any other, fully adopting the rituals of parliamentary behaviour. On the other, it continued to deploy its hit squads (commanded by its leading cadres) in targeted attacks. In this way, Golden Dawn made it clear that its tactic now involved a two-pronged strategy. That became evident in the period between the 6 May and 17 June elections. Ilias Kasidiaris’ much-publicised televised attack on KKE MP Liana Kanelli and Syriza MP Rena Dourou on 7 June 2012 was not the spontaneous outburst of an unrepentant Nazi. It was a deliberate show of force by a representative of an organisation that had long engaged in violent displays as a means of garnering media attention. During the same period, Golden Dawn organised a flagrant, military-style crackdown on migrants who had sought refuge in the abandoned Piraiki-Patraiki factory in Patras (22 May 2012); wearing helmets and using batons, its members attacked antifascists in the city of Veria (9 June 2012); Golden Dawn members assaulted a KKE election stall in Agia Paraskevi, Athens, injuring a municipal councillor, and conducted a murderous attack on the residence of Egyptian fishermen in Perama (both on 12 June 2012). The local “cell leader” headed the attack in Perama, which had been announced the previous day by the local Golden Dawn MP Yiannis Lagos. On the night of the June elections, a squad of Golden Dawners even attacked a lawyer and municipal councillor, Ioannis Kardaras, at a Syriza election stand in Piraeus (17 June 2012).

In parallel to this series of violent displays, during the 40-day interval between the two elections the organisation took care to present an image of a mild, parliamentary and consensual political force, which was ready to work with everyone for the good of the nation. The leader himself made sure to be photographed bowing respectfully while shaking hands with a leading New Democracy MP, Dora Bakoyannis. He secured a good word from the President of the Republic, Karolos Papoulias, and had no difficulty in taking advantage of an appearance on the programme of well-known journalist Stavros Theodorakis on Mega TV to highlight his new profile: that of a mild nationalist, much maligned and misunderstood because of his refusal to renounce his past and to “sell out” his comrades whenever they demonstrated excessive zeal. Golden Dawn even had a government proposal ready and waiting once talks to form a viable coalition after the May elections broke down. They proposed an alternative, technocratic government made up of prominent personalities, suggesting as prime minister the controversial public figure Basil Markezinis, who combines his prestigious role as advisor to the British queen with his connections to Greek shipping magnates.

Golden Dawn employed the same duplicitous strategy after the June 2012 elections and the formation of a government under Antonis Samaras, leader of the conservative New Democracy party. Michaloliakos was the only leader of an opposition party to wish the tripartite coalition a successful term:

We have carefully followed the programmatic statements of the prime minister and, although we have completely divergent opinions on the matter, we nevertheless wish the coalition every success, particularly as far as the economic issue is concerned.<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks later, addressing his own public, Michaloliakos expressed his “disgust” at parliament. “You are the assault divisions,” he told his organisation’s members, before threatening that Golden Dawn would leave parliament and take to the streets. “Then we’ll show them,” he said. His rhetoric reached a crescendo with a direct reference to the German Stormtroopers, the notorious SA:

Then they will know what “assault divisions” means, the meaning of war, of struggle, of bayonets sharpened on the pavement.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Hellenic Parliament, *Official Proceedings*, Plenary, 7 Jul. 2012 ([goo.gl/ggyFNr](http://goo.gl/ggyFNr), in Greek).  
2. Golden Dawn at Thermopylae, video uploaded on 26 Aug. 2012 ([goo.gl/oqChOp](http://goo.gl/oqChOp), in Greek).

The group's first move after cementing its electoral success was to submit a party statute or constitution to the Supreme Court, the first time Golden Dawn had ever presented such a document. Its purpose was to retroactively void any previous associations the group had with organised criminality and to consolidate its new, law-abiding image as a political party, nothing else. Golden Dawn had no legal obligation to submit such a document, particularly since the elections had already taken place; the Supreme Court's legal role is to receive applications from parties and candidates to run for election, not to validate their status as parties by checking their statute. I will deal with this issue in more depth later, but suffice it to note for now that references to a Golden Dawn constitution appeared in the first issues of its newspaper over 20 years ago, casting doubt on the claim that the post-election statute was the first ever drafted by Golden Dawn.<sup>3</sup>

From that point, organisational schizophrenia continued to be the norm for Golden Dawn, which sought to balance repeated declarations of loyalty to the state apparatus with blatant instances of illegality on the part of its hit squads, which now appeared to be led by its MPs taking advantage of their parliamentary privileges.

On the one hand, the organisation trod a beaten political track in parliament, developing its own clientelist relationships, fulfilling all sorts of requests and supporting the positions of certain economic sectors or local community representatives. In the period before the arrests (7 July 2012–28 September 2013), Golden Dawn submitted a total of 2,205 requests to parliament (of which 1,760 were written questions, 242 oral questions and 155 requests). While the requests touched on subjects one would anticipate from an organisation like Golden Dawn, they were far below what one would expect in terms of numbers: only 62 questions referred to foreigners, 61 to Turks (or to Turkey), 74 to Albanians (or to Albania), 26 to Roma, barely seven to church affairs, two to Old Calendarist monasteries and two to the notorious issue of the "aerial spraying" of chemicals, the so-called "chemtrails" conspiracy theory.

In its parliamentary activity in the period before the Fyssas murder, Golden Dawn relied on the element of surprise, taking advantage of the unease of other parliamentary groups and, most importantly, of New Democracy's ambivalence towards it. Beginning with its very first question in parliament, Golden Dawn exposed the government, unveiling the sad picture of ministers scurrying to and fro to gather data to answer a question submitted by

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3. See *Golden Dawn*, 28 Feb. 1993 (in Greek).

MPs Giorgos Germenis and Ilias Kasidiaris on “the implementations of the provisions of the Greek citizenship code and law 3838/2010”.

Even while engaging in such parliamentary provocation, Golden Dawn did not hesitate to support the government in passing crucial bills; examples included blocking the formation of a committee of inquiry into the privatisation of ATE Bank (1 August 2012), glorifying the billionaire Latsis family (19 September 2012), objecting to even the slightest attempt to tax ship owners (3 November 2012) and supporting the sale of islands to private parties (13 February 2013). Michaloliakos’ statement – one might say his confession – during the parliamentary debate on the 2013 budget is particularly revealing of Golden Dawn’s political priorities:

It is my opinion, and thus the opinion of all the Greek nationalists whom I have the honour of representing, that from the first instance, from the moment that our creditors’ and lenders’ representatives came here, instead of drawing other red lines, we should have drawn two: one for defence and one for public order.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, Golden Dawn’s “street-based” criminal activities escalated, again following a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, it carried out many minor offences, some of them in front of television cameras. On the other, away from the glare of the media, it stepped up its night-time attacks, primarily on migrants. The latter were, of course, systematically denied by the organisation, which even attempted to renounce incidents where it engaged in public demonstrations of violence. A typical instance of such dogged and absurd denial was the organisation’s insistence that it was not responsible for the attacks on market vendors in Rafina and Mesolongi, which occurred only a few hours apart, and which were perfectly coordinated and performed in front of TV cameras. In their pleas before the courts, Golden Dawn members denounced these actions. The Golden Dawn MP who led the raid in Rafina, Panagiotis Iliopoulos, stated that “it was a politically misguided outburst and was, of course, wrong”. He then defended himself by reminding the court that “I’m had only been an MP for two months and had no prior experience.” Moreover, in his words,

Overturing a stall was a spontaneous act of misdirected indignation by some friends of the party. Because they were not in the same spot as I was, unfortunately I didn’t manage to prevent it.

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4. Hellenic Parliament, *Official Proceedings*, Plenary, 11 Nov. 2012 ([goo.gl/BsFCwl](http://goo.gl/BsFCwl), in Greek).

They denounced these actions and the other arrests with the same ease. But Golden Dawn had made a statement after the attack, in which they explicitly stated that the perpetrators were low-ranking members of the organisation: “Golden Dawn members went around the market and destroyed three stalls of illegal vendors,” the statement admitted unequivocally.<sup>5</sup>

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5. “Golden Dawn’s battle against immigrant vendors in Mesolongi,” 8 Sept. 2012 ([google.gr/DlhSvp](http://google.gr/DlhSvp), in Greek).



# AFTER THE ARRESTS



**FOLLOWING THE ARRESTS** in the aftermath of the Fyssas murder, the hit squads' nocturnal attacks decreased drastically: from October to December 2013, the Racist Violence Recording Network registered 18 incidents, a number that stood in stark contrast to the average of 50 incidents documented in the previous quarters. The report noted:

The significant decrease in the incidences of racist attacks compared to the previous months of 2013, apart from the positive dimension it bears, supports the relevant data and position of the Network regarding the existence of hit squads, against which the Greek state was unfortunately too slow to take action.<sup>6</sup>

The facts suggest that Golden Dawn had not foreseen a formal criminal prosecution, and thus continued to entertain its old habits even after its electoral success. The leadership's standard response to any allegation against it was to deny any involvement by its members in the criminal offense in question and to attribute the accusation to the scheming of political opponents, thus presenting themselves as victims of the "system". But the arrests did not only take Golden Dawn by surprise; a large segment of the political system, including government officials, expressed similar levels of bewilderment. As a result, from early on in the investigation into the existence of a criminal organisation within Golden Dawn, the government appeared divided on how to deal with this particular type of political party.

The response of government officials to Golden Dawn's parliamentary presence was symptomatic of the political system's overall uneasiness at the party's prosecution. Following the first arrests of the organisation's leading figures, the public order ministry stopped answering questions from Golden Dawn MPs, limiting itself to reiterating the same negative statement. The

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6. Racist Violence Recording Network, *Annual Report, 2013*, 5 ([goo.gl/3SMEmj](http://goo.gl/3SMEmj)).

first such statement, signed by the public order minister, Nikos Dendias, was issued on 5 October 2013:

In response to the questions tabled by MPs A. Gregos, I. Panagiotaros and C. Pappas, we inform you that, following the criminal prosecution of a number of leading representatives of Popular Association–Golden Dawn on charges of directing and participating in a criminal organisation (article 187 of the criminal code), and the temporary detention of, among others, Golden Dawn’s general secretary and two other party MPs for committing further offenses (article 282 of the criminal code), we are unable to pursue the issues raised by members of the same parliamentary group, since processing them while the criminal case is pending and while they remain members of the party would be in violation of constitutional and parliamentary rules.<sup>7</sup>

Subsequently, the same standard text was repeatedly issued by the same ministry in response to questions tabled by Golden Dawn MPs. The cabinet reshuffle of June 2014, which resulted in Vassilis Kikilias being appointed minister, did not change this. The fact that no other ministry – not even the justice ministry – adopted the public order ministry’s line, choosing instead to respond to Golden Dawn MPs’ questions, was ample proof of the Samaras government’s reluctance to commit to a decidedly oppositional stance against Golden Dawn. All other ministers responded as if nothing had happened, as though those same “constitutional and parliamentary rules” did not apply to them.

Dendias clarified his stance in an interview:

This question has preoccupied me personally and has given rise to a profound contradiction. How is it possible for a party that participates in formal political dialogue to be dealt with by the justice system, at least in the current preliminary proceedings, as a criminal organisation of the highest degree? As a first public step, as far as my ministry is concerned, I do not intend to answer Golden Dawn’s questions for as long as the party remains the object of parliamentary scrutiny and given the judicial authorities have stated that this issue involves a criminal organisation and have recommended indicting Golden Dawn members and MPs. Moreover, the party leader himself, along with two other MPs, has been taken into custody.

Dendias moved on to raise the possibility of barring Golden Dawn from parliament even before the conclusion of the case:

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7. Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection, “Response to question tabled by MPs Antonis Gregos, Ilias Panagiotaros and Christos Pappas,” ref. 7017/4/16908, 5 Oct. 2013 (in Greek).

Our legal and parliamentary systems need to come up with a comprehensive response to remove this contradiction. Though it is true that we find ourselves in uncharted territory, and that there are a number of problems, we should not send out mixed messages or risk compromising our own legal integrity in an attempt to devise a quick solution to the problem.<sup>8</sup>

In another interview, the same minister revealed the government's unease:

To begin with, there is no provision in the current legal framework that can be used to tackle Golden Dawn, and we cannot create an ad hoc institutional framework for the purpose. We are faced with a quasi-contradiction, not only in the judiciary but also more generally in parliamentary democracy. Following the request of the Supreme Court prosecutor, a parliamentary party has suddenly been officially designated a criminal organisation. The lower branches of the justice system conducting the investigation have confirmed this designation. Meanwhile, that same organisation remains a parliamentary party, recognised as such by the Supreme Court. No law or constitutional provision exists to resolve this contradiction. Democracy must, as far as possible, respond to this obvious and unprecedented challenge because the two realities cannot be allowed to exist in parallel.<sup>9</sup>

The government's own unease was not, of course, institutional, but political in origin. What was confirmed in caricature form by the video scandal involving Golden Dawn MP Ilias Kasidiaris and the Samaras government's cabinet secretary, Takis Baltakos, had long been known: namely, that there was a link between the organisation and the higher echelons of government and that a number of advisers at the Maximos Mansion, the prime minister's office, had prepared for a potential partnership with one "extreme" (Golden Dawn) in order to halt the ascent of the other "extreme" (Syriza).<sup>10</sup> The arrests impeded this nightmarish scenario from coming to fruition, but the remnants of the failed strategy are still detectable today, both in the ranks of New Democracy and in a significant portion of the media.

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8. See the interview with George Terzis and Yannis Souliotis, *Kathimerini*, 6 Oct. 2013 (in Greek).

9. Interview with Lambros Kallarytis and Dimitris Kottaridis, *Epikaira*, 17 Oct. 2013 (in Greek).

10. On 2 April 2013, Ilias Kasidiaris published a video of himself and the then government cabinet secretary Takis Baltakos, which showed them exchanging information and insulting the prime minister, Antonis Samaras, and leading judicial figures for arresting the Golden Dawn leadership. A version of the video with English subtitles is available ([goo.gl/SRbj6g](http://goo.gl/SRbj6g)).

On the other hand, however, the opposition to the judiciary following the murder of Pavlos Fyssas and the consequent arrest of Golden Dawn MPs was supported by a variety of political actors: not only by Independent Greeks, who shared a part of the electorate with Golden Dawn, but even by some Syriza elements. Members of the then opposition objected to the waiving of the parliamentary immunity of Golden Dawn MPs and challenged the suspension of state funds for the Nazi formation. A glaring example was the claim by Syriza MP Alexis Mitropoulos, expressed in a letter addressed to his party leader, that “this is not a classic Nazi party”:

As long as Golden Dawn continues to declare itself opposed to the dominant bourgeois forces, it cannot be an ally or supporter of the system ... we should bear in mind that Golden Dawn is still in its initial antisystemic, antimemorandum ideological stage.<sup>11</sup>

For its part, Golden Dawn attempted to exploit these unexpected lifelines in order to support its propaganda line of “political persecution”. Of course, its parliamentary activity declined considerably after the arrests. Overall, from October 2012 to the end of July 2014, its MPs submitted 648 requests, largely written questions (570) and significantly fewer topical questions (63), which, as they are raised during plenary sessions, require the physical presence of the MP. In the first four months after the arrests (1 October 2013–31 January 2014), party MPs submitted 430 written questions and 44 topical questions, while in the following five-month period (1 February 2014–30 June 2014), they submitted 379 written questions and only 19 topical questions. Again, the themes were predictable, but not their volume: 23 questions referred to Turks or Turkey, followed by questions about Albanians or Albania (12), “illegal immigrants” (6), Roma (3), Pakistanis (2), etc. Of course, a significant number of questions concerned the judicial investigation into the case, and were peppered with insulting comments about one of the investigating magistrates, Ioanna Klapa, and continuous objections to minister Dendias’ refusal to answer questions submitted by Golden Dawn MPs.

Throughout this saga, the government’s duplicity with respect to the organisation became clear, as the justice minister, Charalambos Athanasiou, adopted the opposite position to his colleague in the public order ministry. Indeed, Athanasiou did not hesitate to publicly “eviscerate” Dendias, in his response to a question posed by Golden Dawn MP Dimitris Koukoutsis:

Dear colleague, for the third consecutive week I have kept my appointment with your party to answer your questions. I stress this for

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11. “Let us not vote for the dissolution of a legitimate party,” *RealNews*, 19 Jan. 2014 (in Greek).

those who have accused me of avoiding your questions. I have come in good faith, once again, to answer questions to which I have already given clear and detailed answers, both in committee meetings and in plenary sessions.<sup>12</sup>

The political substance of Golden Dawn's parliamentary interventions is indicative of the organisation's overall interests. Even while imprisoned, Nikos Kouzilos, MP for the central Piraeus constituency, managed to submit a question defending the interests of ship owners. He requested the state to

strengthen the country's position as a global shipping centre with initiatives that will encourage shipping companies to settle in Greece, that will make it more attractive to use the Greek shipping register, to encourage the flow of maritime capital in the domestic banking system and to reduce bureaucratic obstacles.<sup>13</sup>

The creation of the new Syriza–Independent Greeks coalition government under Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras after the 25 January 2015 elections did not alter the situation much. The only government official who refuses to answer questions from Golden Dawn MPs is the alternate minister for immigration policy, Tasia Christodouloupoulou. The parliamentary speaker, Syriza MP Zoi Konstantopoulou, was attacked for proposing a number of initiatives deemed favourable to Golden Dawn, such as her insistence that MPs held on remand appear in parliament. Golden Dawn naturally rushed to exploit these initiatives in order to claim that the democratic parties were divided on the issue of Golden Dawn and to blur its own image in light of the trial. For instance, the party's 2015 election slogan was "Vote for us so we can block the path of Syriza and the left". And yet, the day after the elections, Golden Dawn declared itself willing to support a left government as a member of an informal "antimemorandum" front. In this way, the organisation's leadership hoped to strengthen its claim that the prosecution launched against it was the result of a political conspiracy – specifically, the Samaras government's intervention in the judicial system.

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12. Hellenic Parliament, *Official Proceedings*, Plenary, 7 Feb. 2014 ([goo.gl/Nj1fPF](http://goo.gl/Nj1fPF), in Greek).

13. To the Minister for Shipping and the Aegean, "Dramatic decrease in Greek registrations," ref. 967, 9 Jul. 2014 (in Greek).



# **LINES OF DEFENCE**

**F**ollowing their arrest, Golden Dawn's leaders unanimously denied any relation to Nazism or national socialism. They attempted to prove this by referring to autobiographical details that they hoped would make the suggestion that they could be Nazis or racists seem absurd. Giorgos "Kaiadas" Germanis appealed to the fact that his music band included an Indian and that his manager was a "colour-ed American"; Panagiotis Iliopoulos stressed that his brother was a priest, like their grandfather, and that his father was a church singer; Kostas Barbarousis noted that his wife is of Mexican origin and that, therefore, he had no problem with foreigners, etc.

Of course, this denial falls flat given that evidence abounds to support the contrary: that the organisation's relationship to Nazism is all-embracing and constant. Those who insist on characterising Golden Dawn as a Nazi party are not, as the organisation claims, simply its "political opponents" or members of the antifascist movement. All the academics who have analysed the particularities of this organisation concur on the issue of its Nazi character. Moreover, they stress that this Nazi trait does not belong to a distant past; it has remained very much alive, even following Golden Dawn's entry into parliament. Analyses undertaken by Vassiliki Georgiadou, Antonis Ellinas, Marios Emmanouilidis, Afroditi Koukoutsaki, Stavros Zouboulakis, Savas Matsas, Despina Papadimitriou, Kostis Papaioannou, Anna Frangoudaki and Dimitris Christopoulos are of particular interest.<sup>1</sup>

Here I would mention, in brief, the significant findings of Vassiliki Georgiadou, who suggests that "this is not a party that relies solely on a cult of personality, but a formation grounded in the 'leader principle' (*Führerprinzip*)"; that from the very beginning there were two categories of Golden Dawn membership: one small, closed group of leaders and a second group of loyal followers who implemented the decisions of the leadership. In other words, "Golden Dawn has cre-

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1. For a comprehensive list, see the bibliography.

ated reasonable grounds for the existence of parallel organisational structures, other than those outlined in the (new) party constitution and which function as a party militia.”

In the same study, Georgiadou notes that Golden Dawn’s “recent denial of Nazism is only superficial”. She elaborates:

Golden Dawn’s (verbal) distancing from totalitarian political regimes deploys arguments that do not challenge the validity of the ideological hard core of these regimes (vitalism, national corporatism, a thirst for violence, ethnic tribalism) or their practices (militarisation, a mass party militia, mass extermination) or their aesthetics (mysticism, the glorification of strength and masculinity).

Her conclusion is that “national socialism, veiled or not, remains the ideological foundation of Golden Dawn”.<sup>2</sup>

The reports of international organisations, alarmed at this brutal revival of Hitlerism in a European Union member state, express the same certainty regarding the Nazi character of the organisation.<sup>3</sup>

Further insights into the character and practices of the organisation can be gleaned from the findings of the two investigating magistrates who requested that parliament waive the immunity of Golden Dawn MPs on the basis of their investigation.<sup>4</sup> The findings, included in the case file, attest to the Nazi character of the organisation, its paramilitary structure, its hierarchical framework, the omnipotence of the leader and the leadership’s direct knowledge of the actions of the hit squads. The evidence is overwhelming. Let us take, for instance, the messages found on the mobile phone of Giorgos Patelis, sent by Yiannis Lagos MP on 12 September 2013, the night of the bloody attacks on the PAME flyposters. “The commie cunts will likely get a solid beating in Perama today,” the “district leader” (Lagos)

2. Vassiliki Georgiadou, “The electoral ascent of Golden Dawn: a revenge vote of the precarious and new political opportunities,” in *2012: the double electoral earthquake* (Athens: Themelio, 2014), 185–219 (in Greek).

3. See also the report by Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, following his visit to Greece, 28 Jan.–1 Feb. 2013, Strasbourg, 16 Apr. 2013 ([goo.gl/L8vjg4](http://goo.gl/L8vjg4)).

4. A comprehensive list of findings is available on the website of *Efimerida ton Syntakton* ([goo.gl/vn4zwl](http://goo.gl/vn4zwl), in Greek).

informed the “cell leader” (Patelis). “They’re out painting and Tasos has gathered 30 people or so and is heading there.” A few minutes later came confirmation of a successful outcome: “They got a first response.” The only argument Patelis’ lawyer could think of to contest this evidence was that the attack on PAME was conducted at 11.50pm, but the messages were registered at 8.50pm. Of course, the argument fell flat once people realised that text messages are recorded in UTC, in other words at a three-hour time difference with Greece.

# ◆ 'WE ARE NOT NAZIS' ◆

**THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO ACCEPT** Golden Dawn's argument that appearances can be deceptive and that it is merely a "nationalist" organisation are a number of lawyers in the organisation's circle and some journalists who, for their own reasons, seek to appeal to Golden Dawn's audience. A grotesque example is the muckraking journalist Makis Triantafyllopoulos who, on his TV show, took care to relieve Kasidiaris of his most glaring identification with Nazism: the swastika tattoo on his left arm. "Mr Kasidiaris revealed his arm to me and showed me that it is not, in fact, Hitler's swastika but Schliemann's Trojan symbol," Triantafyllopoulos said, referring to a 19th-century German archaeologist. He continued: "If he had wanted a swastika, he would have had a normal one tattooed, one leaning clockwise rather than anticlockwise." Of course, Kasidiaris' tattoo not only faces clockwise, as the Nazi swastika does, but it is tilted at a precise, 45-degree angle, exactly as Adolf had intended. Nevertheless, Kasidiaris seemed fond of Triantafyllopoulos' interpretation and kept up the myth, responding to questions raised on the organisation's online channel in the following manner:

What can I say about the tattoo? OK guys, if you can't recognise the Greek character of this symbol, then you are an idiot. I have nothing else to say. If you can't tell that these symbols are purely Greek, then you're totally out of it.<sup>5</sup>

Even in its early stages of activity, when it still openly displayed Nazi symbols, Golden Dawn, like all similar groups, was duplicitous in its self-definition, describing itself as "nationalist" to outsiders and "national socialist" to insiders. It is well known that the use of "nationalist" as a more acceptable term than "national socialist" or "Nazism" was introduced into the rhetoric

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5. "Political broadcast of Golden Dawn," 5 Aug. 2012 ([goo.gl/zuSLVm](http://goo.gl/zuSLVm)). Kasidiaris has also written an article on the quintessential Greekness of the swastika. See Ilias Kasidiaris, "The Greekness of the symbol," 6 Aug. 2013 ([goo.gl/UBMG1P](http://goo.gl/UBMG1P), in Greek).

of the organisation decades ago. Its use, however, requires some explanation, in particular regarding the insistence that “our nationalism” is special. “Being a nationalist means accepting the third great ideology of history, the most advanced and the most natural,”<sup>6</sup> wrote an anonymous columnist in the organisation’s newspaper, in response to a letter claiming that national socialism and the swastika were Greek in origin, that Hitler thought like a Greek and that “The Germans were the most honourable conquerors ever to go through Greece.” The author explained:

Comrade, we do not expect all our friends and comrades to have full knowledge of the war in all its detail. Besides, we live in a time when little by little, the truth is coming to light, and everyone will learn who was really responsible for what happened to our country.<sup>7</sup>

Every so often, however, there are reminders:

Our own nationalism is particularly tribal and social in nature and is not a general belief in favour of the nation but has a specific ideological structure and political view.<sup>8</sup>

This “third ideology” they espouse is then outlined in another text:

In this century, the third way in politics is the path of the popular nationalist movement of interwar Europe. This form of politics prevailed in Greece under the 4 August regime, in Italy under fascism and in Germany under national socialism. It is clear that the nationalism of our time is directly related to those interwar regimes.<sup>9</sup>

After the temporary suspension of the organisation’s activities following Periandros’ trial, in 2006 its newspaper published an article announcing that from that point on they would identify as “nationalists”. The article reassured its readership that the organisation had not “changed its views”; rather, that it saw itself as “more of a political experiment”.<sup>10</sup> To this day, “nationalist” remains the official description of the organisation’s ideology on the Golden Dawn website. It presents itself an ideological movement which denies both the labels “fascist” or “Nazi”, but which only clarifies its objection to fascism, which supported the notion of a strong state, and instead argues that “the hard core of Golden Dawn’s beliefs is nation–race”. This is the quintessence of German national socialism. The relationship be-

6. “The nationalist’s journey,” *Golden Dawn*, 14 Jan. 1994 (in Greek).

7. “We are nationalists,” *Golden Dawn*, 21 Jan. 1994 (in Greek).

8. “Nationalists and ‘nationalists,’” *Golden Dawn*, 16 Sept. 1994 (in Greek).

9. “What nationalism is not,” *Golden Dawn*, 17 Mar. 1995 (in Greek).

10. “Nationalists or Nazis?” *Golden Dawn*, 6 Apr. 2006 (in Greek).

tween Golden Dawn's ideological parameters and those of German national socialism is evident from its publications:

- ◆ Books authored by Michaloliakos and republished in 2012 are not only apologetic of Hitler, whom they exculpate not only for his invasion of Greece and the crimes committed during the occupation, but praise him
- ◆ Similar positions have been supported in a series of ideological journals published by the organisation
- ◆ Golden Dawn's ideological manifesto for the future (2010) is a blatantly Nazi text; it analyses the strategies and tactics of a "civil war", a direct reference to the violent and illegal practices of the organisation
- ◆ At the same time, the organisation's publishing house, New Sparta, has issued several new books on Hitler, bearing its logo "NS", a direct reference to national socialism (*Nationalsozialismus*)
- ◆ Meanwhile, representatives of the organisation have seized every opportunity to display banners that refer to Nazism, following the example of like-minded organisations abroad (mainly in Germany, where Nazi propaganda is prohibited by law). Like all prominent members of the organisation, Eleni Zaroulia, the wife of the Golden Dawn leader, is in the habit of wearing a Lonsdale sweatshirt (a popular sartorial choice of neo-Nazis because when worn under a jacket, only the letters NSDA are visible, referring to Hitler's NSDAP party). Giorgos Misiakas, the "theorist" of the organisation, sports either the symbol of the Nazi Stormtroopers (SA) or that of the SS Nordland division. Even at the memorial service for the two Golden Dawn members who were murdered outside a branch of the organisation in Athens in November 2013, alongside the customary meander, Golden Dawners wore the Yr or Ƴ symbol (from the rune alphabet) used by the SA. As for the meander, they describe it in their magazine as a sort of "evolved" swastika.

# THE SECRET STATUTE

**DURING THEIR INITIAL QUESTIONING** by the investigating magistrates, Golden Dawn's leading members repeatedly denied the existence of the organisation's first statute or constitution, a copy of which was obtained in the preliminary stages of the investigation, together with the handwritten regulations of the "Protesilaus Training Corps", the prototype of the hit squads. Michaloliakos would explain:

The two falsified documents reflect die-hard national socialist positions that have nothing to do with Golden Dawn's true ideology, which is grounded in the principles of Greek nationalism.

The Golden Dawn leader did, however, admit that texts dating from the organisation's early years "echoed national socialist ideas which I no longer accept", thus contradicting himself. Other leading members called to testify before the investigating magistrates repeated the formulation in their own statements. Ilias Kasidiaris insisted that "I don't recognise the documents; I find them idiotic and clearly to have been fabricated," while Ilias Panagiotaros remarked: "I'm certain that the purported statute is the brainchild of journalist Dimitris Psarras, who is known for his hostility towards our ideology and our party." Christos Pappas claimed: "I have no relationship to these documents and avow that the documents have nothing in common with me or Golden Dawn, and that I consider them to be stupid." Moreover, the Protesilaus manual was "an unsigned text, entirely unfamiliar to me and beyond all political reason to the point of ridiculousness, that does not reflect my views".

The Golden Dawners' omertà on the subject of their initial statute was broken only by Nikos Michos, who, in his deposition to the investigating magistrates, acknowledged the existence of the document, adding quickly that "it was a rough draft from the 1980s". The magistrates picked up on his slip and asked:

How do you know that this text circulated as a draft in the 1980s? In what ideological spaces did it circulate and what is its relationship to the ideological principles of Golden Dawn?

Michos made a crucial disclosure in his answer:

I was informed of the existence of the draft only the day before yesterday by one of my fellow detainees. I can't remember which of my co-defendants first pointed it out to me. I myself had never seen it. But I assume from the font and style that it must have been written at that time.

Thus, according to Michos' confession, either Michaloliakos, Pappas, Panagiotaros, Kasidiaris or Lagos had admitted that document existed, even if only in "draft" form. Let them work it out between themselves.

Of course, both the statute and the Protesilaus document are genuine. Apart from the details already submitted to the court, a mass of evidence confirms the authenticity of the statute. The document first came to light in the 1990s. A large part of the statute's contents is detailed in my book on the organisation and in the book by journalist Nikos Hasapopoulos, who has his own sources.<sup>11</sup> The existence of the statute had never been questioned before the arrests.

The organisation's argument that its first and only statute was the one filed to the Supreme Court on 30 August 2012 confirms rather than challenges the existence of the earlier text. This new statute was purportedly approved by Golden Dawn's political council on 22 August 2012. Crucially, it contains a reference to the 2010 bailout memorandum signed with the troika. The question arises: had the organisation been operating without a statute before 2012? The suggestion is absurd. Of course Golden Dawn would never have formally submitted to the Supreme Court a statute referring to its ambivalent organisational structure (its political and military sections, known as the "organisational wing" and the "administrative wing", respectively). That much is obvious; no such organisation wilfully makes its internal documents public.

Proof of the authenticity of the first, secret statute can be found even in the organisation's own newspaper – and in relatively recent texts, or at least recent enough in that they don't celebrate the youthful follies of Michaloliakos and Pappas. The first piece of evidence is a 2005 article by Kasidiaris, which describes the procedure for recruiting new members to the organisation.<sup>12</sup> What does this text reveal?

1. It explains that new members are admitted through "recruitment cells". The procedure is described in detail in the original statute, which men-

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11. Dimitris Psarras, *The black book of Golden Dawn: documenting the history and actions of a neo-Nazi group* (Athens: Polis, 2012), 53–62 and Nikos Hasapopoulos, *Golden Dawn: the history, the characters and the truth* (Athens: Livanis, 2013), 38 (both in Greek). For more on the "Protesilaus training corps", see 27–28 and 113.

12. I[l]ias K[asidiaris], "How can I become a member of Golden Dawn?" *Golden Dawn*, 13 Jan. 2005.

tions “Recruitment cells for new members” (article 22.1). In contrast, the 2012 statute, to which all the detained leadership figures refer, makes no mention of the subject.

2. It says that following their “graduation” from the recruitment cells for new members, these members remain “on probation”, even for “some time”. Such are the provisions made in the secret statute (article 12.1.2). But in the 2012 statute, the phrase “probationary” member does not exist. This provides more proof on which is the organisation’s real statute.
3. The text acknowledges that the real activities of Golden Dawn members can only be revealed to those who “participate in it in real time and partake in the activities of the cells”. In other words, the article admits the existence of secret activities that can only be revealed to candidates over time, after they have passed the “initiation” stage.
4. As for the content of these activities: the text refers, among other things, to “hardened street fighters”, which contradicts the assurances about “legality” in the depositions of Golden Dawn suspects.
5. It is telling that the invitation text on “training” was signed by someone who has been referred to as the “trainer” of the organisation by a number of witnesses.

A week after the publication of Kasidiaris’ article, the organisation’s newspaper contained a second article on a related issue.<sup>13</sup> The text confirms the existence of these “cells”, their training programmes, the blind discipline they cultivated, their military structure and blatant racism, as well as the objectives of their activities:

Once again, the recruitment cell for new members has successfully completed its training programme, managing to instil in the minds of our candidate comrades the Golden Dawn spirit, a way of thinking and of acting, the way of life of the genuine and revolutionary Greek nationalism of the modern era. The spirit of Golden Dawnism is blood, honour, faith, loyalty, knowledge, power, self-sacrifice. You must realise that integration into Golden Dawn is not a hobby or a waste of time, but a gesture of wholehearted allegiance to the secret voice of blood for the nourishment and deployment of the fighting spirit in the service of the three pillars of “Believe–Obey–Fight” and in order to add a small but important brick to the holy struggle of the movement for a greater Greece in a free Europe, against globalisation and multicultural societies, against capitalism and its minions, against the complete impunity of capitalists and their interests, against foreign immigrants, legal and illegal, and the misery of the popular masses sacrificed for the benefit of speculators and those who

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13. Giorgos Mastoras (Misiakas), “The reception cell for new members,” *Golden Dawn*, 20 Jan. 2005 (in Greek).

deliberately drive the Greeks into poverty, hunger and unemployment. In the great Greek white family of Golden Dawn, the old welcome the new, not with selfishness or snobbishness, but as comrades, as brothers-in-arms, in the eternal battle of the sun against darkness, as fellow fighters in the common struggle against the “eternal Jew”, who is the flagship of hate and of the domination of Zionism over the whole planet.

The article ends with the slogan “Long live victory!”, which the leader shouted outside the courthouse following his deposition, and which of course is nothing more than a translation of Hitler’s “Sieg Heil”, the chant which ended the speeches of the real Führer and which is tattooed on the arm of Panagiotis Iliopoulos, one of the Golden Dawn MPs taken into custody.

But even the showcase statute that emerged after the 2012 elections contains some interesting clues about the organisation’s *modus operandi*. For example, article 6.4 states:

[every member] is entitled to the moral, political or any other form of protection and solidarity from the party for any kind of action undertaken with the intention of protecting and strengthening the political and ideological positions and principles of the party.

This system of mutual “protection” can be seen in the trial. Of course, this mutual protection extends only to leading members. The ordinary members, as we shall see, are deemed entirely expendable.

More revealing is the organisation’s effort to deflect responsibility for its actions to ... the Supreme Court! An unsigned communiqué dated 30 September 2013, referring to the new statute, reads:

If some idiot truly believes this “document” has anything to with the real Golden Dawn statute, he should question the integrity of the Supreme Court and of the interior ministry that have allowed our movement to participate in the electoral process for decades. Would this country’s Supreme Court ever have approved a request from a “criminal organisation” to run for election?

It is difficult to imagine a cruder confession. The statement acknowledges that the terms outlined in the original statute indeed fit the parameters of a criminal organisation. Thus, if the statute were legitimate, it would confirm that Golden Dawn is indeed a “criminal organisation”.<sup>14</sup>

The original (and entirely authentic) statute’s controversial points are its references to national socialism, to the “leader principle” (the infamous

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14. “The real statute of Golden Dawn,” Golden Dawn website, 30 Sept. 2013 ([goo.gl/bEqgHZ](http://goo.gl/bEqgHZ), in Greek).

*Führerprinzip* that so baffled some journalists) and to the military structure of the organisation (particularly the reference to the organisation's "ranks", from the "phalanx member" (*falangitis*), "cell leader" and "phalanx leader". None of these ranks are mentioned in the new showcase statute, despite the fact that the new statute, too, ensures the omnipotence of Michaloliakos. But all this can be found in abundance in the organisation's published texts and, of course, in its actions. The leader principle itself appears in published texts, accompanied by the explanatory note that "it is more sacred than the majority principle".<sup>15</sup> The absence of the term "leader" in the showcase statute is obvious. It seems that the second statute was drafted with the purpose of presenting the organisation as a law-abiding party and to disassociate the leader from the activities of the hit squads. But the organisation gave itself away, yet again: the introduction of the new statute refers to a "leader". And yet, according to that same document, the party has no leader, only a general secretary!

The leadership's last resort in contesting the authenticity of the original statute was to insist that it was not discovered during the house searches conducted by the police during the arrests. This is false. When the police raided Christos Pappas' home in the northeastern city of Ioannina, they uncovered a mass of evidence proving the Nazi nature of the organisation. They also recovered a hand-drawn diagram of the structure of Golden Dawn that fits perfectly with what is described in the statute. The document, entitled "The Golden Dawn Circle: Internal Code", suggests that Golden Dawn perceived of itself as a form of masonism.

The association is particularly pronounced on a page headed "Internal Pyramid", which confirms the suspicion that Michaloliakos' choice to name the organisation "Golden Dawn" was inspired by the British masonic Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The initial framing of Golden Dawn as a "masonic guild" is described in the autobiography of one of the organisation's co-founders, Ion Philippou (the pseudonym of Ioannis Perdikaris):

Sunday 9 February 1986, a carefully selected date, the date of convergence of heaven and earth, saw the initiatory rite of the founding of the national socialist guild of Popular Association–Golden Dawn.<sup>16</sup>

It was around this time that the organisation's "Declaration of Ideological Principles" surfaced. Aside from the obsession with mysticism evident in the above citation, the declaration confirms the blind discipline of the organisa-

15. *Golden Dawn* 15/28, July 1987. Also cited in Hasapopoulos, *Golden Dawn*, 46 (in Greek).

16. Ion Philippou, *Golden Dawn: a civil compass* (Athens: Ilektron, 2013), 35 (in Greek).

tion's cadres and the absolute omnipotence of the leadership, which decides on all of the organisation's activities. In this hierarchy, the leader is referred to as the "high priest" and is followed by the "worthy", the "brigadiers", the "knights" and the "heralds" and, finally, much further down, at the base of the pyramid, the ordinary members of the organisation.

The core leadership, the "Golden Lodge", stands at the top of Golden Dawn, and includes the leader (the high priest) and the worthy, with the central council and the "phalanx leaders" ranking immediately below them. Again, the crucial element of the discovery is that it confirms the authenticity of the statute. The separation, delineated in a page describing Golden Dawn's organisational structure, between "Golden Dawn" and "Popular Association" and the six directorates and departments contained within them, is absolutely identical to those outlined in the secret statute of Golden Dawn, which the leadership of the organisation have rejected as "nonexistent" or "fabricated". Moreover, pages 5 and 6 of the statute are identical with the outline of the organisational structure sketched in a document recovered in Pappas' Nazi safehouse. And thus the organisation's main line of defence crumbles.

It should be noted that very few documents from the organisation's early years were recovered in police raids on the leaders' offices and homes. The sole exception was Pappas' home in Ioannina, which turned up a number of relevant documents. It is likely that Pappas simply didn't have enough time to empty the house, though he and Panagiotaros had managed to move home in Athens, clearing out their previous residences a few days before the arrests and, of course, after the murder of Pavlos Fyssas (Pappas on 22 September and Panagiotaros on 21 September 2013). Not even a complete archive of the organisation's journal or copies of its internal bulletin, titled *Etos Miden* (Year Zero), were found. After the attack by the Periandros phalanx in the summer of 1998, efforts were made to destroy all potentially incriminating evidence and any documents directly linking the organisation to Nazism. A final clearout took place following Michaloliakos' announcement of the suspension of Golden Dawn's activities in 2005. Nevertheless, among the more recent documents found in Michaloliakos' possession was a two-page document dated 28 May 2008, which summarises the original statute and repeats verbatim the organisation's structure that includes the same procedure for admitting new members. Again, of course, this document has nothing in common with the 2012 statute.

It is particularly interesting to observe that, because they know that the original statute is authentic, Golden Dawn members attempt to obscure its contents and to confuse the (typed) statute with the (handwritten) document entitled "Protesilaus Training Corps". A few weeks after the arrests,

the organisation held a press conference in a downtown Athens hotel in order to “expose the wretched plot”. The purpose of the press conference was obviously to dispel the impressions left by the previous days’ blistering revelations surrounding the criminal activities of the Nazi organisation. The speakers included Artemis Matheopoulos, Eleni Zaroulia, Polyvios Zisi-mopoulos, a legal advisor (Papagrighoriou) and Ilias Kasidiaris, who launched into a solemn explanation of the organisation’s belief in a “plot” hatched against it. His main argument rested on denying the authenticity of the statute. “The Supreme Court prosecutor is being examined for misconduct, for having included a purported statute of Golden Dawn in the indictment,” Kasidiaris claimed. Referring to a slide he had projected, he made the following comment:

This miserable, idiotic document should not be used against us. Do you see this? When I went to the investigating magistrates to make my statement, they presented me with a document, which they claimed was the statute and an official document of my party. As you can see, it is written in pen, and has a bad sketch, like a cartoon, at the top.

But the document Kasidiaris had projected was not the statute, but the “Protesilaus Training Corps” text! And all the comments about “handwriting”, “pens”, “cartoons”, etc., have nothing to do with the statute.

But Kasidiaris continued:

And this is what the investigating magistrate presented to Golden Dawn’s general secretary and MPs, claiming that this is the statute of Golden Dawn. Based on this document, we are being prosecuted for establishing and directing a criminal organisation. I won’t lie to you: I burst out laughing, watching this set up being playing out. A sheet of paper, covered in poor handwriting with a caricature in the top-right hand corner. And yet, the head of the country’s third largest party is currently on remand on the basis of this document. If Greek citizens saw this document, it would make their hair stand on end, because we are dealing with a judicial crime, the likes of which this country has never faced.<sup>17</sup>

To this day, the organisation has repeated this trick, replacing the statute with the “Protesilaus” document in order to confuse observers.<sup>18</sup>

17. A video of the press conference on 23 Oct. 2013 is available on the organisation’s website ([goo.gl/GJTjLG](http://goo.gl/GJTjLG), in Greek).

18. A post typical for this website reads: “The editor of Vourliotis’ findings, Dimitris Psarras, refuses to submit Golden Dawn’s fake statute to the judicial authorities,” 28 Jul. 2014 ([goo.gl/NXYJ3Q](http://goo.gl/NXYJ3Q), in Greek).

Further evidence of this tactic is Golden Dawn's eagerness to disown a further document, which had accompanied the statute, dating from the same period (1986–1987). The document, the "Declaration of Ideological Principles", is even better known since it was published in pamphlet form by Golden Dawn. Many academics have referred to this pamphlet, which *Ethnos* newspaper included in its collation of the organisation's documents.<sup>19</sup>

The organisation now seeks to downplay the pamphlet, which overlaps with the secret statute, as a private text written by a former member, as stated in an article on the organisation's website:

This is the personal text of one individual, who has not been part of the organisation for 20 years. Specifically, he left Golden Dawn in 1991.<sup>20</sup>

This "individual" is the aforementioned Ioannis Perdikaris (who uses the pseudonym Ion Philippou), cofounder of Golden Dawn and author of an autobiography that is very damaging for the leader, as it contains information that Michaloliakos would like us to forget. In the attempt to demonstrate Perdikaris' total estrangement from the leadership, the organisation did not hesitate to disown its own ideological proclamation:

The infamous Declaration of Ideological Principles is a personal document of his and has nothing to do with Golden Dawn. Moreover, of course, it does not have the form of a statute and makes no reference to any issue pertaining to the organisation's structure or to the party. However, all this will be dealt with by the legal department of Popular Association–Golden Dawn.

Here, the organisation trapped itself in its own lie; the declaration is not a "personal text". It is mentioned a number of times, in the most formal way possible, in Golden Dawn's documents as "the text of the ideological principles of our movement" and ranks first on the list of official publications that Golden Dawn supporters can obtain from its offices. Indeed, the declaration comes before books by Michaloliakos, Hitler, Evola, Savitri Devi and other similar figures.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the organisation's journal frequently published articles that analysed and popularised the declaration, which the organisation now claims not to have adopted. Thus, the Golden Dawn leadership unwittingly provided further indirect evidence for the authenticity of its other documents as well.

19. Takis Katsimardos and Thodoros Roubanis, "The black book of Neo-Nazism," *Sunday Ethnos*, 29 Sept. 2013 (in Greek).

20. "The editor of Vourliotis' findings, Psarras, unveils new fabrications against Golden Dawn," 30 Oct. 2013 ([goo.gl/MJlaqH](http://goo.gl/MJlaqH), in Greek).

21. See the back cover of the journal *Golden Dawn* 17/30, Oct. 1987 (in Greek).

# AN ORGANISATION WITHOUT MEMBERS

**AS WITH THE CONSTANT ALTERNATION BETWEEN TERMS** such as “nationalism” and “national socialism” which, in the eyes of the organisation, are identical, the members of the organisation also vary in ideology. Moreover, depending on the needs of the moment, the ideological tenets of the organisation acquire broader or narrower definitions. The main concern is to obscure the dual organisational structure of Golden Dawn: the public political side and the secret operational parts. The purpose is clear: when a member is caught committing an offense, they are instantly relegated to the category of “nonmember”, simple “follower” or some random guy just “passing through” the organisation. This has been common practice among members since 1994. In response to an anonymous letter writer, Golden Dawn’s newspaper explained:

The official position of Golden Dawn as a legal political party that respects institutions must rest in opposition to violence. However, each like-minded individual will act according to his conscience. But this does not mean that they can expect any official approval or support for these actions. I think I have made myself clear.<sup>22</sup>

Naturally. The leader could not make himself clearer. Those who engage in violent actions are simply “like-minded” individuals and should not expect support should they happen to fall into the hands of the authorities.

Giorgos Roupakias is a case in point. After being arrested red-handed and confessing that he had actually murdered Pavlos Fyssas, the organisation denied any connection with him. Even after the publication of a hoard of photographic evidence showing that Roupakias participated in a number of the organisation’s “actions” (from the “training” camps on the Neda river to the hit squads’ invasion of a rightwing commemoration for Second World

22. *Golden Dawn*, 9 Dec. 1994 (in Greek).

War collaborators at Meligalas), Golden Dawn's leadership insisted that he was a random individual who had latched onto the organisation's branch in Nikea without ever acquiring a proper relationship to it. Or that he was a Communist Party plant. Eventually, it emerged from a document from the organisation's central administration that Roupakias was a deputy of the local "cell leader", Giorgos Patelis!

The purportedly loose relationship to the organisation was brought up again by the leadership. "There are no cells," Michaloliakos insisted in his testimony. Moreover, he claimed that "now we have local branches. It is possible that cells might exist in small, sparsely populated areas." He seemed to believe that no one had ever seen the sweatshirts worn by the hit squads with the typical logo of "Nikea Cell" or "Perama Cell", etc. Moreover, in order to diminish his own personal responsibility as leader, Michaloliakos added with sombre humility: "I'm just the head of the central committee."

When questioned on the issue of the party's organisational structure, Christos Pappas pleaded ignorance, using his parliamentary obligations as an excuse:

Over the past year and a half I have been dealing with Golden Dawn's parliamentary work and have had absolutely no involvement with local organisations or with the various Golden Dawn offices across Greece.

When asked about the rights and obligations of members, Ilias Panagiotaros scrambled for a different line. He denied that the organisation had members!

Let's start with an explanation. Golden Dawn has supporters, not members. For the purpose of self-protection from malicious persecutors, provocateurs, etc., the party has no members. And, moreover, because of the huge number of people attending our meetings, we decided on the term supporter, which is not accompanied by any rights or obligations, only a supporter card.

With this egg of Columbus, the organisation solved its problem: if it has no members, then it cannot be blamed for the actions of its (nonexistent) members! But this wasn't enough. As Panagiotaros testified:

Some [supporters] strutted around with their cards, taking advantage of the urban myth that has been created around Golden Dawn. If I'm not mistaken, these cards were withdrawn in 2013.

In other words, the organisation did not even have "supporters". The crime cannot be made to disappear, but the perpetrator can! In a variation of

Panagiotaros' statement, Yiannis Lagos clarified in his own testimony that "the number of Golden Dawn members, in the technical sense of the term, is very small in comparison to the number of its supporters". Panagiotaros was not wrong. A confidential circular sent by Golden Dawn's central administration and signed by its financial director, Dimitris Vlachopoulos, stated: "Today [10 June 2013] we fully abolished the distribution of supporter cards" and we request "urgently that all supporter cards already in circulation be returned today".<sup>23</sup>

However, all the organisation's internal documents confirm what the leadership insisted on denying in their testimony. Namely, that it is a hierarchical group that operates on the basis of strict military discipline and perceives itself as a "liberation army". A circular issued on 23 April 2013 by Christos Pappas, on the order of the leader, states:

The continuing successful course of the movement will depend on its compact, seamless and well-ordered organisational structure. Therefore, from now on, all procedures will be forwarded to the administrative organs without any exceptions. Any attitudes or actions, however small, that are driven by extra-institutional interests but executed in the name of the leader or purporting to be the result of direct consultation with the leader, will be considered misconduct and will be subject to proportionate sanctions. We will have to work closely with the movement's organs and function as a nationalist political liberation army; we will have to be faithful in our enforcement of the established principles of the military dogma: unwavering loyalty and obedience to the hierarchy.

The command ends with the motto "Long live victory! Long live the leader!", paraphrasing the German "Sieg Heil! Heil, mein Führer".<sup>24</sup>

The truth is that after the 2012 elections, Golden Dawn faced a dilemma as to how to capitalise on its rapidly growing number of membership applications without compromising the dual organisational structure: the "political" and "operational" arms. In November 2012, the leadership ordered the "re-registration of members of the local branches and cells of Popular Association", in order to maintain centralised control. Note that the terminology used in this "re-registration" document have nothing to do with the organisation's "official" statute, submitted to the Supreme Court only three months earlier:

<sup>23</sup>. Golden Dawn–Central Administration, "Circular 23, addressed to all local branches and cells (confidential), Subject: abolition of supporter cards" (in Greek).

<sup>24</sup>. Political bureau of the general secretary, 23 Apr. 2013 (in Greek).

Golden Dawn members are divided into two categories: full members and probationary members. As is well known, there are also supporters and friends of the movement who, as needs to be pointed out, however, are not proper members of our party apparatus. The criteria for the re-registration of members are:

For full members: a) Active presence in Golden Dawn prior to 2009, b) In the event that the previous condition does not apply, the individual should have an active presence since at least before the May 2012 elections and should have also held a position of responsibility in the local branch or cell. This should be corroborated by two full members, who were involved in the organisation before 2009. For probationary members: for someone to be a probationary member of the movement, they should have been proposed by at least two members and, in any case, must have been involved in party activities before the 2012 elections. In all cases, the above criteria should be strictly applied in the selection of members or probationary members of the movement. The relevant proposals from the local branches and cells are expected by Wednesday 28 November so we can start printing IDs valid for one year, for members and probationary members. The proposals from the local branches and cells are not binding on the central administration.<sup>25</sup>

These statements should not be taken at face value. The only conclusion that emerges from the comparison of these successive organisational models is that Popular Association–Golden Dawn was originally a chameleon-like organisation which, depending on the needs of the moment, camouflaged itself in the appropriate way. Throughout this period, the only thing that remained constant was the strictly hierarchical structure, the leader, and the distinction between the public and the operational arms, however the latter may have varied in name (task force, combat cell, phalanx, golden eagles, etc.)

This chameleonism not only applies to the organisation's definition of member and membership; the party organisation itself has a similar structure for overcoming difficulties. After all, even its decision to create a "party" is directly related to the intention of exploiting constitutional loopholes and the privileges available to political parties. Michaloliakos' statement as the leader of the "political movement" (rather than "political party") of Golden Dawn was filed to the Supreme Court on 13 February 1983, eleven years before the organisation made its first electoral attempt in the European

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25. Golden Dawn–Central Administration, "Circular 2, Registration of members," 21 Nov. 2012 (in Greek).

Parliament elections of 12 June 1994. There are a number of texts penned by the leader and his associates from that period, in which, true to form, they reiterate that Golden Dawn could not possibly be connected with the offenses with which it is charged given “it is a legitimate party recognised by the Supreme Court”. The organisation’s legitimacy has consistently functioned as an alibi for its actions. In response to his comrades who expressed surprise at the organisation’s participation in the 1996 general election, in which it reaped a miserable 0.07% and 4,487 votes, the leader explained that the reasoning behind the decision to run as a party was to “legitimise the movement within the provisions of the constitution”.<sup>26</sup>

However, the ambivalent composition of the organisation could not be entirely concealed. Hence the perpetual mutation of the party. In the beginning, the leadership established a dichotomy between Golden Dawn and Popular Association, where the former was a “group responsible for ‘study’ and ‘guidance’ while the latter ‘acted politically’”. “Golden Dawn does not exist as a political movement,” Michaloliakos insisted. “Golden Dawn is merely the title of the monthly magazine and weekly newspaper issued by Popular Association, a legal political party founded in 1984.”<sup>27</sup> How serious these statements were can be measured from the fact that, a few months later, the organisation ran for elections for the first time under the name Golden Dawn, with Popular Association listed beneath it, while the organisation’s newspaper stated “we want Golden Dawn’s political mechanism to spread across the country”.<sup>28</sup>

A further example of such strategic manoeuvring was the ease with which the leader “suspended” the organisation’s operations in 2005 and transferred Golden Dawn’s public activities to the Patriotic Alliance. Moreover, he adopted the National Dawn label as an alternative electoral mechanism in the event that the Supreme Court would challenge Golden Dawn’s participation in the 2014 European elections.

The organisation’s intention to take advantage of the privileges enjoyed by political parties is evident in its representatives’ statements following the 2012 election, in which they referred to parliamentary immunity as useful in covering up the actions of party officials.<sup>29</sup>

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26. Nikolaos Michaloliakos, “What does the world want from us: how we see the world,” *Golden Dawn*, 10 Oct. 1997 (in Greek).

27. *Golden Dawn*, 25 Feb. 1994 (in Greek). The leader is wrong. He submitted the relevant request to the Supreme Court in 1983.

28. *Golden Dawn*, 8 Jul. 1994.

29. “We are taking advantage of parliamentary privileges. We now carry licensed weapons, there are no crises after incidents and we’re a little more comfortable in our movements,” declared Ilias Kasidiaris in Chania, Crete, in Nov. 2012.

A February 2013 speech drafted by a leading cadre and delivered to Golden Dawn members outlines the organisation's perception of its own structure. The content of the speech was cited by Stathis Boukouras, a former MP now ostracised, to prove the allegation that MPs have no privileged role in the internal hierarchy of the organisation. "In Golden Dawn's marches and events," the article states,

the image our enemies and the ignorant perceive is akin to the Spartan phalanx: an unbroken procession of equals, fellow combatants, comrades, who fought with the same fervour. And its destiny is to march over anyone who stands in its way.

At another point, the text states:

A basic tenet ensures the correct functioning of hierarchical systems like Golden Dawn's. This is the principle of the "supreme leader", the prime example of classical Greek political thought as recorded by the great [German Nazi ideologue] Alfred Rosenberg.

This is yet another iteration of the "leader principle" (*Führerprinzip*), which the organisation's leading figures now contest. The conceptual parameters of leadership are presented as "ancient Greek" but, circuitously, through the filter of Nazi theory.

The organisation sees itself as a model of national socialist rule:

We should clarify that we envision our own *modus operandi* as a standard to be extended to an entire state. We hope one day to be able to make the Greek state function in accordance with Golden Dawn, in which the will of the leader is imposed and immediately enforced, without exceptions or scruples ... At the pinnacle of this hierarchical pyramid is the man we all respect and follow. The pure exponent of our ideology, our leader Nikos Michaloliakos. Our ideological concept of the leader-guide is of metaphysical substance. And by metaphysical substance we mean the firm belief of all Golden Dawners that our leader is the man who will lead our ideology towards final victory against the forces of darkness that are plotting the death of Hellenism, and who will lead the entire country to the creation of the third Greek civilisation of which we all dream.

However, throwing a veil of obscurity over the organisation's membership does not help the leadership alone. When charged with some offence, members themselves prefer to deny their relationship to Golden Dawn and to attribute their actions to a "moment of madness", so as to avoid aggravating their case with issues of intent and premeditation (Roupakias presents

a case in point), or with the further charge of participating in a criminal organisation.

The case of Tasos Pantazis is a pertinent example. Under interrogation on 6 October 2013, he alleged that he had never joined the organisation, while at the same time admitting that he was a member of the five-member board of the local branch in Perama. Pantazis was accused of participating in the murderous attack on the Egyptian fishermen in Perama (12 June 2012). In his testimony, he again denied his relationship to the organisation, while snitching on Ilias Kasidiaris:

I have had nothing to do with Golden Dawn ... I demand a certificate that confirms I am not a member of Golden Dawn, to prove that I have nothing to do with it and I demand not to be punished for the excesses of Mr Kasidiaris, whose actions I hold in contempt.

A short time after the attack, Pantazis became the leader of the Perama branch, of course with Kasidiaris' blessing.

# THE 'ANTI-NAZI' LAWYERS

**GIVEN GOLDEN DAWN HAS NO ... MEMBERS**, or very few of them, their lawyers must, for the most part, be nonmembers. Preferably, lawyers should be drawn from the ranks of ... Golden Dawn's political opponents! The leadership's choice of defence counsel for Golden Dawn members reveals a great deal about its strategies to deal with the judicial investigation of its activities. Contrary to what one might expect from an organisation that has no shame in expressing its creed, following the arrests lawyers who ascribed to Golden Dawn's ideological principles were marginalised and assigned trivial tasks, such as providing commentaries on some legal issue or the legal popularisation of the "conspiracy" theory. But the tone of the defence of leading members is now set by lawyers who present themselves as ideological rivals of Nazism and fascism and even of ... anticommunism! Of course, an appearance was made early on by the leader's brother, Panagiotis Michalolias, once associated with the extreme right (as a member of the fascist National Association of Greek Students in Italy (ESESI) during the dictatorship period, and a collaborator of former junta leader Giorgos Papadopoulos in the creation of the National Political Union (EPEN) in 1984). However, as with the Periandros case, he appears in court in an "apolitical" capacity, as an eminent criminal lawyer. Meanwhile, the lawyers hired by the Golden Dawn leadership are in constant competition to be the first and loudest in denouncing fascism together with ... Golden Dawn itself!

Let us begin with Alexis Kougias, who is defending former Golden Dawn MP Stathis Boukouras. Kougias has distanced himself from the organisation, claiming it is far removed from the ideological space of Pasok, from where he came himself, and that he has worked with members of New Democracy. "Personally, I'm an anti-Nazi," Kougias announced on Nikos Chatzinikolaou's television show, adding: "From the age of 15, I grew up in the [left-wing] Lambrakis Youth. I'm not a politician, I'm not a Golden Dawner. I hate the Nazis."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup>. Nikos Chatzinikolaou's Ston Eniko show, 24 Feb. 2014 ([goo.gl/GcQT48](http://goo.gl/GcQT48), in Greek).

The Kougiaris case is by no means unique. A colleague's position is equally divergent. Alexandros Alexiadis, counsel for the hardened and naturally unrepentant Yiannis Lagos, felt obliged to declare his own antifascism on the same television show:

Given that lately it seems procedural order has been overturned entirely and even lawyers are expected to have a certificate of political beliefs, I, too, should take this opportunity to declare that I come from a leftist family. I have always voted for parties of the left and continue to do so. I have nothing to do with the right or extreme right.

Even Pavlos Sarakis, who was expelled from New Democracy for provisionally agreeing to represent Ilias Kasidiaris, found an opportunity to express his antifascist fervour: "If there is a fascist problem today, are these prosecutions aiding or abetting it?"

But the most revealing statement came from Angelos Angeletos, counsel for Eleni Zaroulia, the leader's wife: "Ms Zaroulia's choice to hire me was inspired by my political principles, which are diametrically opposed to those of Golden Dawn." Moreover, Angeletos expressed "profound irritation" at the "anticommunist frenzy" of Failos Kranidiotis, a New Democracy representative and lawyer who appeared on the same television show. Meanwhile, Angeletos continued to denounce anticommunism and to defend ... Syriza:

From being on your show I have realised that the theory of the two extremes is still very much alive among some guests, who, with their anti-communist delirium and their fervent opposition to that particular party [Syriza], have shown me that the theory of the two extremes still exists. It seems that the next step will be the reopening the banishment islands for the left. History is not difficult to work out. It is what made [early 20th-century Greek prime minister Eleftherios] Venizelos cart royalists and communists off to penal islands so that he might be the sole ruler. Immediately after the war all leftist organisations were called criminal organisations, accused of being agents of the Soviet Union and traitors.

But why did Golden Dawn leaders pick their counsel from the "diametrically opposed" side of the political spectrum, as Angeletos described it? And how is it possible that these lawyers should have accepted a role in a trial so often described as "political"? The only likely answer is that the Golden Dawners are attempting to disguise their own Nazism through the "antifascist" profile of their counsel.

Men accused of rape often hire female lawyers in the hope of sending an implicit message to the court that, were they guilty, no woman would agree

to defend them. The same applies here. Yet again, Golden Dawn's "means" are its "message". The "antifascism" of Golden Dawn's counsel was the necessary complement to its renunciation of Nazism.

Of course, the recipe can backfire and send the defence strategy off course entirely. Once the decision was made to release Zaroulia, despite the prosecutor's recommendation that she be kept in custody, Angeletos immediately praised the judicial authorities, and in particular the two investigating magistrates, Klapa and Dimitropoulou:

Both the [judicial] council's decision and the previous dispute between the investigating magistrates demonstrate that, in a country in which everything is collapsing, justice still lives up to its role.<sup>31</sup>

But only a few days earlier, the leader's counsel had filed (yet another) application calling for the disciplinary and criminal prosecution of the investigating magistrates. For months, the defence's line was based on the vilification of the Supreme Court leadership, and particularly of the two investigating magistrates and the public prosecutor, Isidoros Dogiakos. In official party statements, the investigating magistrates were referred to as "political plants", "perjurers", "pawns", "frenzied" or as having "overthrown the constitutional system". Golden Dawn filed a lawsuit against the three judicial officials on 5 June 2014 for a "criminal abuse of power".

How can these aggressive tactics, threats and insults launched against the investigating magistrates be reconciled with Angeletos' songs of praise? Angeletos' lauding of the magistrates was the result of his delight at winning a decision in his client's favour. A few days later, he repeated his praise for Klapa, describing a more recent ruling of hers as a significant step in the defence of his client's rights, as an instance of rapprochement between the justice system and the letter of the law that created a favourable precedent.<sup>32</sup>

To complete the picture, I would add that while Golden Dawn leaders have entrusted their fate to their purportedly antifascist lawyers, the supposed "nonmembers" of the organisation, who have distanced themselves from and denounced the party leadership, have gone in the opposite direction; they have selected the most dogmatic Golden Dawners to represent them. Tasos Pantazis, who as we have seen, led a local branch "without being a

31. "Statement of Angelos Angeletos on the court's ruling on Comrade Zaroulia." Posted on the Golden Dawn website, 2 Jul. 2014 ([goo.gl/ofx6Bo](http://goo.gl/ofx6Bo), in Greek).

32. "Changes to restrictive measures for comrade Eleni Zaroulia: She will be able to see the Golden Dawn leader in Korydallos prison once a month." From Golden Dawn's website, 22 Jul. 2014 ([goo.gl/9ulbWf](http://goo.gl/9ulbWf), in Greek).

member” and who denounced Kasidiaris, entrusted his defence to Christoforos Tsagkas and Tasos Dimitrakopoulos, both members of the organisation and Golden Dawn election candidates.

These grotesque contradictions seem to betray the fact that the defendants and their counsel likely have no strategy and that they are simply improvising. Somewhere in the back of their minds rings the age-old truism “every man for himself”. Unfortunately for them, however, their improvisational tactics have served to undermine all allegations that this is a “political persecution”. And the court case has revealed itself to be exactly what it claimed to be: the criminal treatment of a series of felonies and misdemeanours that appear to be bound up with the practices of a criminal organisation functioning under the guise of a political party.



# **A GREEK NUREMBERG?**

**W**hat can we expect from the organisation during the trial? The incriminating facts included in the case file support the seriousness of the charges and cannot be ignored. The Golden Dawn leadership is trapped in an irresolvable contradiction. On the one hand, in its attempt to refute the charges against it, it is forced to deny any relationship to the murderous violence inherent in the Nazi ideology and tradition and to abandon any member or party official for whom there is compelling evidence of their involvement in criminal acts. On the other, it is impossible for it to maintain its internal cohesion and to ensure the necessary omertà or code of silence among its leading core without recourse to its internal brotherhood of blood, consolidated over years of criminal activity on the streets.

This contradiction was evident from the first few days of the trial. The organisation's leaders chose not to attend, opting to send their lawyers to represent them – as is their legal right. In this way, they sought to highlight their claim that they are not responsible for the crimes before the court. However, with this decision, the leadership essentially abandoned their comrades, leaving open the possibility that they might break the omertà. Moreover, their absence from the courtroom ultimately belied their promise to prove that they are victims of a “conspiracy”.

But there is a second contradiction that has haunted Golden Dawn for years. Its violence, shows of force and terrorism are not the means of political action (as is the case for other violent and armed groups), but rather the message itself, for its supporters and citizens at large. Thus, it is obliged to boast about these activities, even in public – as terrorist organisations do with their proclamations – even though the leadership has denied everything to the prosecutors and investigating magistrates and has renounced some of the members who have been arrested. Golden Dawn's publications document its activities. What one day is a necessary element of propaganda risks becoming incriminating evidence on the next. The organisation is aware of these traps and has taken every care to destroy this evidence in the same way a perpetrator cleans up a crime scene.

One doesn't need to read the voluminous case file to realise the extent of the organisation's criminality. It's sufficient to peruse its publications (newspapers, journals, circulars, etc.). They are Golden Dawn's Achilles' heel. On the one hand, the organisation tried to create a division between the leadership, which handed out orders, and the members of the hit squads, which carried them out. And every time a Golden Dawner was arrested or indicted, Michaloliakos and his colleagues simply feigned ignorance. And if the accused happened to be little-known party officials, the leadership was quick to describe them as "hangers-on" (such as in the Roupakias case). If, on the contrary, they happened to be well-known party personalities, the organisation argued that this was a "conspiracy" (such as in the Periandros case). On the other hand, the organisation's propaganda and even its recruitment methods were based on advertising its "street action", its shows of "force", its military structures and the centralised nature of its decision-making. Much of the evidence incriminating leading Golden Dawn members came from the organisation's own publicity material. And the leader's absolute disavowal of this evidence now works as an aggravating factor against him and his associates.

For years, Golden Dawn struggled to form lasting alliances with broader, extreme-right nationalist right groups. Its rare attempts ended quickly, as Golden Dawn repudiated its allies and denounced their agreements with them. The reason for this is that not even its allies agreed with the activities of Golden Dawn's hit squads and its open espousal of the national socialist model. Some of these "civil war" conflicts between Golden Dawn and other groups even ended up before the courts.<sup>1</sup>

Golden Dawn's recent electoral successes, however, have allowed the organisation to stake its claim to hegemony over the extreme-right spectrum and to demand the support of other nationalist groups in its present hour of need. However, rival groups in the "nationalist space" appear less interested in throwing Golden Dawn a lifeline than in laying claim to the party's electorate.

As with its belated appeals that it is a legal entity, Golden Dawn's strategy of pleading victim to political persecution cannot stand. Not only because the evidence against it is so overwhelming, but mainly because its self-victimisation undermines its image as a "powerful" organisation, ready to fight till the death, replacing it with a that of a emasculated repentant. Thus, this is why Golden Dawn supplements its declarations of loyalty to the legal order with reiterations of threats, insults and promises of war "against

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1. See "Golden Dawn and 'intelligent nationalists,'" *Golden Dawn*, 18 Feb. 2000 (in Greek).

everyone". For a long time, Golden Dawn's leaders had cultivated the image of "wolves among the sheep", declaring "we are not here to save anyone". They nurtured the following picture of themselves:

We are a small pack of silent, red-eyed wolves, moving through a herd of big, arrogant beasts who believe they are omnipotent, without realising that we want to sink our fangs into their big fat necks. We have been here waging war for countless centuries. Our recent defeats were so great that our enemies have allowed themselves to believe that absolute domination was open and available to them – all they had to do was reach out and snatch it for themselves. But before they get the chance to dig their nails into something that doesn't belong to them, we will cut off their hands and then ... their heads. This is a total and merciless war and we will not cease until we emerge triumphant.<sup>2</sup>

In the spring of 1998, a few weeks before Periandros' phalanx organised the attack on Kousouris, Fotiadis and Karabatsolis outside the Evelpidon courts complex in Athens, the leader prophesised:

Soon, a racial and social war will break out and the Spartacus of our era will rouse today's slaves and make them nothing but the losers of the last war. Who will mark the start of this war? All we need is a spark to spread the purifying flame around the world.<sup>3</sup>

After the 2012 elections, Panagiotaros spoke of a "civil war" to journalist Paul Mason of the BBC. And following the arrests, Golden Dawn's website resembled less a space to publish political statements than a fortress under siege, from which war cries were constantly emitted. It is as though the organisation's leadership truly believed itself to be in the *Führerbunker*, in the centre of besieged Berlin, with no way out except "total war".

Recent developments suggest that the Golden Dawn leadership will attempt to mimic the German Nazi party leaders at the Nuremberg trials. It has been studying this model for decades, and its publications abound in analyses of the "unfair trials" and songs of praise for the last imprisoned leader of the Third Reich, Rudolf Hess. An article on the Nuremberg trials states:

This legally and ethically unstable trial established a precedent for trials against all those who share the ideology of the Nuremberg defendants. Such trials are still taking place to this day: half a century later!<sup>4</sup>

2. "Wolves among the sheep," *Golden Dawn*, 28 Jan. 2000 (in Greek).

3. Nikolaos Michaloliakos. "If you want to live, fight," *Golden Dawn*, 3 Apr. 1998 (in Greek).

4. "The Nuremberg trials," *Golden Dawn*, 14 Oct. 1994 (in Greek).

In those trials, most of Hitler's associates responded to all accusations with the same formula "not guilty as charged" ("*Nicht schuldig im Sinne der Anklage*"). In other words, they did not deny having committed the act, but rather tried to situate it within their own value system, in which context it was not a criminal act. One of the two Golden Dawn members murdered outside a branch of the organisation in Athens in 2013 had a black sweat-shirt with this very phrase – in German – emblazoned on it; he can be seen wearing it in the photograph Golden Dawn uploaded to its website in their honour. It is also the phrase that Eichmann repeated mechanically at his own trial. Nowadays it is used by German neo-Nazis to declare their allegiance to national socialism without risking prosecution. Of course, Golden Dawners now deny everything, but the organisation's message, communicated through the abovementioned photograph, is more than clear.

The leadership's first priority remains, of course, to ensure its own impunity. The leader, Michaloliakos, has been a long-standing example, as he has always refrained from partaking in the more "dynamic" activities of his organisation and has taken care to publicly denounce his comrades and their actions whenever any of them were arrested. After the trial began, Michaloliakos went so far as to disassociate himself from all public activities carried out by the organisation, stating that "the individuals dressed in combat uniforms were idiots indulging in the frivolities of one local branch". He even distanced himself from the Hitler salutes, which were "done badly, by myself too".<sup>5</sup>

The Golden Dawn leader has been perfecting this strategy for years. Since the 1980s the organisation's publications have printed articles in support of Holocaust deniers. Their main aim has consistently been to absolve Hitler of responsibility for his actions. A typical example is the organisation's publication of an article entitled "Sixty-five questions and answers on the Holocaust".<sup>6</sup> The text lists the known views of neo-Nazis: that there was no mass extermination of Jews, that the gas chambers were a myth, etc. The article's concluding question reads "Is there any evidence that Hitler was aware of the mass extermination of the Jews?" And the one-word follow-up answer is "No!" Golden Dawn is attempting something similar today. Because leading Golden Dawn representatives cannot deny that crimes were committed or that members and party officials were involved in carrying them out, their last resort is to rescue the leader and the central core of the organisation's leadership on the basis that they were ignorant of what was going on. But the attempt is undermined not only by the strict hierarchical structure of

5. See interview in *Crash*, May 2015 (in Greek).

6. *Golden Dawn* 57, Oct. 1990.

the organisation itself, but by the bounty of evidence in the case file that confirms the hit squads did not act without orders from above. This strategy poses serious risks for the leadership. By distancing themselves from and thus abandoning the physical perpetrators of the crimes, the leadership has left itself vulnerable to betrayal. The forsaken low-ranking members may no longer have any reason to maintain the omertà and, indeed, several are willing to break it: five Golden Dawn members are now in witness protection programmes. Thus, formerly loyal pawns have morphed into boomerangs, turning against Michaloliakos and his associates.

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**ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG**  
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**A**FTER MANY YEARS of bloody action on the streets, the leaders and officials of Golden Dawn are in the dock facing charges of directing and participating in a criminal organisation. No special legislation or political intervention was required. All that was needed was the state's decision to allow the criminal code to be applied and the combining of dozens of case files on the activities of Golden Dawn's hit squads. The representatives of the Nazi organisation like to talk about a "conspiracy" and "political persecution". They deny any relationship to national socialism and any link to those Golden Dawn members caught committing criminal acts and misdemeanours. The usual opportunists are ready to support them, hoping they can make political gain by turning a blind eye to racism, violence and crime. However, the evidence against the organisation is so overwhelming that no one can now claim that "I did not know".

Written by journalist Dimitris Psarras, this booklet examines the reasons why it took so long for the justice system to tackle Golden Dawn, the organisation's activity after the 2012 elections in parliament and on the streets, and the line of defence it has adopted in the trial.