

# Political issues in the fight against the fascist Golden Dawn

19 January 2013

Tens of thousands will rally today in Syntagma Square, Athens to voice their opposition to the fascist Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi) and its attacks on immigrants, leftists and homosexuals.

But those organizing the demonstration are leading working people and youth into a dead end. They are promoting a false policy that will only strengthen the fascists. Its aim is to rehabilitate the parties that bear the chief responsibility for the rise of Golden Dawn and cement their own alliance with these same parties.

A host of pseudo-left groups such as the International Workers' Left (DEA) and Xekinima are urging “left unity” or “a united front of the left” against the fascist threat. The essence of this political formula, as they use it, is to subordinate the struggle of the working class against Golden Dawn to the social democratic PASOK, the trade unions, and SYRIZA (the Coalition of the Radical Left).

The rise of Golden Dawn is the price paid for what these parties have done in either directly imposing a social counterrevolution in Greece or, in the case of SYRIZA, making their central aim the defence of Greek capitalism and preservation of the European Union (EU).

PASOK ruled Greece from 2009 until 2012, imposing every attack on the working class demanded by the troika—the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund—in the service of the Greek and international bankers and big business. When its support collapsed in 2012, PASOK agreed to become the junior partner in a coalition with the right-wing New Democracy (ND) in order to continue and deepen the austerity measures.

“Left unity” with PASOK is also unity with New Democracy and the bourgeoisie. This is made clear by the embrace of the protest by PASOK leader Evangelos Venizelos, ND Prime Minister Antonis Samaras and

Fotis Kouvelis of the Democratic Left (a split-off from SYRIZA and the third party in the governing coalition), with Kouvelis proclaiming, “The democratic forces must raise a fortified wall against those who attack democracy.”

As for the trade unions, over the past four years the Greek working class has staged 19 general strikes and innumerable other strikes and protests involving hundreds of thousands to resist the destruction of their jobs, wages and livelihoods. But the trade union leaders have worked tirelessly to undermine these efforts, either limiting them to protest appeals to the government or isolating and helping to smash struggles, such as the port workers’ strike, that threatened to escape the unions’ suffocating control.

The unions, with the support of SYRIZA and the rest of the pseudo-left organizations, have opposed any mobilization of the working class to bring down the successive governments of austerity, poverty and hunger, while maintaining their alliance with PASOK.

Together with SYRIZA, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and the various groups comprising the Cooperation of the Anti-Capitalist Left for the Overthrow (Antarsya) make the defence of the official trade unions their overarching goal.

SYRIZA became the main opposition party by declaring its hostility to the austerity measures. But this party speaks for a petty-bourgeois layer whose only demand is for the EU to make some token concessions on the timing and scale of the cuts, while agreeing in principal with the perspective of rescuing Greek capitalism by slashing the living standards of the working class. Its main function is to prevent the emergence of an independent and revolutionary movement of the working class.

Immediately prior to last June’s general election, party leader Alexis Tsipras boasted that “SYRIZA is

the only political movement in Greece today that can deliver economic, social and political stability for our country”. This, he continued, “will benefit the euro zone” and “save the common currency”. Once the ND-led coalition began its fresh austerity drive, Tsipras declared, “It is not a time to provoke the fall of the government.”

For months Tsipras has toured the capitals of Europe, reassuring German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French Prime Minister François Hollande and others that SYRIZA is a force for economic and social order.

Golden Dawn has been able to gain strength only because of the political paralysis of the working class at the hands of these pseudo-left groups and the rotten opportunism of SYRIZA in particular. The fascists exploit the role of the so-called “left” in propping up right-wing governments and supporting the bankers’ union known as the EU. They routinely denounce SYRIZA as “PASOK Mark 2” and a party of the establishment, while posturing as a revolutionary alternative. Golden Dawn boasts that a SYRIZA government would pave the way for its own rise to power.

Golden Dawn further benefits from the nationalism and xenophobia of the governing parties, such as the recent “Xenios Zeus” campaign, which targeted 66,000 suspected illegal immigrants for arrest, detention and deportation. It is well established that Golden Dawn’s shock troops are largely made up of police officers out of uniform, and that at least half of the police in Athens voted for the fascist party.

To invoke the supposed “democratic” credentials of any of the establishment parties under these circumstances is a grotesque fraud and a betrayal of any genuine defence of democratic rights. Greek workers are suffering under a de facto dictatorship of the bankers and businessmen, who are imposing mass unemployment, the destruction of essential services and poverty.

Workers and youth must draw conclusions not only from the situation they now face, but from the bitter experiences of the past. The central lesson of the 1930s and 1940s is that the subordination of the working class to the supposedly democratic bourgeoisie by the Stalinist and reformist parties, in the name of anti-fascist “unity”, led to the victory of fascism in one country after another and ended in a war that

devastated Europe and much of the world.

Greece was ruled by a military-police dictatorship from 1936 before it was invaded first by fascist Italy and then Nazi Germany and Bulgaria. The occupiers found their collaborators within the bourgeoisie, many of whom survived the war as major political and industrial figures and provided the leadership of the “Regime of the Colonels” between 1967 and 1974 in the person of the CIA agent Col. George Papadopoulos.

Any trust extended to the bourgeoisie and its political defenders today would have consequences just as tragic.

Greek workers and youth must instead take up a fight against Golden Dawn on their own terms and by their own methods, including the formation of defence committees in every working class and immigrant neighbourhood. They must do this while recognising that their goal is not the defence of “Greek democracy,” by which is meant the defence of Greek capitalism, but the establishment of genuine democracy and equality through social revolution.

An industrial and political offensive must be developed to establish a workers’ government that will seize the assets of the banks and corporations and utilise Greece’s resources to fund the social and economic programmes necessary to provide jobs, education, housing and health care.

This is not a task for the Greek workers alone. It is a struggle that must be consciously waged as part of a broader political mobilisation of the European working class against the European Union and its constituent governments, and for the establishment of workers’ power in the form of the United Socialist States of Europe. To take forward such a fight requires the construction of new and genuinely socialist parties—sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Chris Marsden

To contact the WSW and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>