



Paul Isaac Hagouel
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Transcript

PAUL ISAAC HAGOUEL: The problem for me is not the policies of the Golden Dawn Party. The problem for me is that there are 400,000 Greeks who voted for the Golden Dawn.

ALEISA FISHMAN: In May 2012, the Golden Dawn party received nearly 7% of the popular vote in Greece and gained a foothold in the Parliament. Leveraging fears about the country's ongoing economic crisis and unemployment, Golden Dawn used anti-immigrant and anti-minority rhetoric to gain votes. As a representative of the Greek delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Paul Hagouel is concerned about the rise of rightist parties in governments across Europe.

Welcome to *Voices on Anti-Semitism*, a podcast series from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum made possible by generous support from the Elizabeth and Oliver Stanton Foundation. I'm Aleisa Fishman. Every month, we invite a guest to reflect about the many ways that anti-Semitism and hatred influence our world today. From his home in Greece, here's Paul Isaac Hagouel.

PAUL ISAAC HAGOUEL: The Golden Dawn political party is a legal party, represented in the Parliament of Greece. It is a rightist party. It starts with their slogan "Greece for Greeks." Greece is reeling from one of the worst economic and financial crises in its almost 200 years of independent existence. And we are already in the fourth or fifth year of deflation. And this economic malaise created a huge army of unemployed, created people who cannot meet the basic needs of their children, let alone of themselves. So the rhetoric of the Golden Dawn rings very sweetly to the ears of those people.

So they distribute food only to Greeks, not to other people in need who might be bona fide legal immigrants here in Greece, but they don't fall into the racist category that Golden Dawn creates—even though it doesn't say so—but it creates that category. Suddenly the rhetoric turns against the immigrant, who is always the culprit for any crime or for taking jobs away and

things like that. It definitely went public with its dislike for Jews. And even officials here in Greece, they distinguish between Jewish Greeks and Christian Greeks by calling the first "Jews" and the second one is "Greeks," you know. So Golden Dawn finds obviously fertile ground, even led out by the official state.

My parents are Leon Haguoel, who is an Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp survivor. His number is 118633. My mother is Yvette née Beraha. She was hidden during the occupation of Greece and she was saved.

So what is the state doing when the Golden Dawn denies the Holocaust? When, if you deny the Holocaust, you deny—if we take Thessaloniki as an example—the annihilation by the German occupier of 50,000, first of all, Greeks. They were Jewish Greeks. So we should never use the term: "50,000 Jews of Thessaloniki perished." It's 50,000 Jewish Greeks of Thessaloniki perished.

The way the Christian Greek is raised, the way people are educated in the religious studies, which are mandatory in schools, they are raised about the superiority of the Greek Christian Orthodox religion, so anything that's not Greek Christian Orthodox it's an aberration. Even educated people, they cannot comprehend that there are other people who are Greeks—there are Jews, there are Muslims, etcetera, etcetera, and etcetera. And that unwittingly feeds into anti-Semitism. And I don't say that it's done because the state has malevolent intentions, because it's indifferent, maybe, or it didn't think about it. But things don't work that way. It's a very short distance between anti-Semitism and prejudice to genocide. You have to continuously be proactive on those kinds of issues.