

Hello, and welcome to As It Is -- the daily magazine show from VOA Learning English! I'm George Grow.

Today, we tell about a political party in Greece that some people have compared to the followers of former German leader Adolf Hitler.

And later, we have a report about some very, very, very rich people in Africa.

But first, to Greece and the Golden Dawn party...

Political observers are calling the Golden Dawn party in Greece "neo-Nazi" after the arrest of its leader and other members. They have compared it to the Nazi party of Germany's Adolf Hitler before and during World War Two.

The Golden Dawn leader and other party members were arrested recently for suspected links to the murder of a popular singer. But in opinion studies, more than six percent of Greeks say they support the party. Jerilyn Watson has more.

The party leader shouted as he was being led away on charges of belonging to a criminal organization. But party followers continued to come out to support him.

Spyros Economides is with the London School of Economics. He says that kind of support tells a lot about the depth of the economic problems in Greece.

“The nature of the crisis, the scope of the crisis, has meant that a large number of people from all walks of life, of all ages, have decided that this is the kind of organization that best represents their prospects.”

Golden Dawn wants to reject the terms of an international plan to rescue Greece from financial failure. The party accuses other political parties of corruption and inability to govern. And, it blames immigrants for many of the country’s problems.

Golden Dawn has long been accused of using fear and violence. Dimitar Bechev is with the European Council on Foreign Relations. He says little has been done to control the party. He says Greek officials failed to react to earlier crimes by either party members or people connected to Golden Dawn.

But that is changing. Last month, a man who claims to be a Golden Dawn supporter reportedly killed Pavlos Fissas, a popular rap singer. Mr. Fissas was a critic of Golden Dawn.

Party officials denied any connection with the killing. But a police raid on Golden Dawn offices found objects that appear to show the party was working with corrupt police officers. Since then, the party's popularity has dropped in opinion surveys. It fell from a high of 13 percent to about 6.5 percent.

Professor Economides says Greeks who looked to Golden Dawn for help are starting to understand just who they have been supporting. In terms of the party's ideology, he says, there is no doubt that it is a neo-Nazi party.

Opponents of Golden Dawn are making their opinions clear, especially after the killing of Pavlos Fissas. A huge crowd of mourners was present at his funeral. But Golden Dawn is promising to fight on. And with Greece's economy still in crisis, the country's problems are far from over. I'm Jerilyn Watson.

You are listening to As It Is, in VOA Learning English. I'm George Grow in Washington.

And now we turn our attention to billionaires, people who have a billion or more dollars. That number is written with 10 zeros or 12 zeros, depending on where you live. But however you write the numbers, it is a lot of money!

Africa had six out of ten of the fastest growing economies over the past 10 years. So it does not come as a big surprise that the number of billionaires in Africa has been growing.

There are at least 55 billionaires on the African continent. So says the Africa's Richest survey from the business magazine Venture Africa.

There are 10 countries named on the list. Nigeria leads the way with 20 billionaires. South Africa is second with nine, and Egypt has eight.

The combined wealth of the 55 billionaires is \$143.88 billion. The richest man on the list is Aliko Dangote. He started investing in manufacturing 30 years ago. Since then, his investments have grown to more than \$20 billion. Second on the list is South African investor Allan Gray. Nigerian businessman Mike Adenuga was third.

Of Nigeria's billionaires, 13 have large or total investments in the oil business. Mining is another major source of wealth across the continent.

The Venture Africa survey has more than three times the number of billionaires reported on earlier lists. Forbes magazine noted only 16 billionaires in Africa last year.

Chi Chi Okonjo publishes Venture Africa. He says his magazine's Nigerian and South African base is helpful, providing more information than some lists.

“We know, because we have people on (the) ground, some of these people are actually people we know personally. So we know their assets. That’s the difference. So we’re able to provide much more detailed information.”

His employees estimated wealth through publicly held stock shares, privately held companies, investment bankers, business experts and other measures.

Chi Chi Okonjo says Africans are generally quiet about their wealth.

“Wealth is still somewhat taboo in Africa. People prefer to discuss what they are doing for their communities rather than how much money they have. It’s just a cultural thing. So people don’t like to discuss how much money they have or how much they’ve amassed.”

Azar Jammie is the director of Econometrix, an economic advisory service in Johannesburg. He says the growing number of billionaires might not be a great sign for the general economic health of Africa.

“It seems to be going hand in hand, with growing inequality around the world. Not everyone is getting rich at the same pace. The rich appear to be getting richer, faster than the poor are getting richer.”

He says the economic growth comes from fast and large population growth and an increase in commodity prices such as oil. Another influence is economic growth in China, which has heavily invested in Africa.

Chi Chi Okonjo says he is not surprised at all by the findings. He says the magazine was conservative with its estimates of wealth, just to be safe.

“I do think the number is a whole lot more than the 55 that we have, so we’re not surprised. And I believe that we have a few more entrepreneurs who at some point in time will list their assets or make their business a bit more transparent.”

And, he expects the list of billionaires will be even larger next year.

And that’s our program for today. I’m George Grow. Join us again tomorrow for another As It Is from VOA Learning English. Also, stay with VOA for world news at the beginning of every hour, Universal Time.