

STOP THE TRIALS IN TURKEY

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Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey

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Foreword

by Alf Lomas MEP

I congratulate the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey on producing this pamphlet and on all their other activities in support of the oppressed people of Turkey.

Tony Benn, prominent Labour leader, Emin Bozarslan, Kurdish writer, and Aydın Meriç, Assistant General Secretary of DİSK, are representatives of a very wide section of the British and Turkish people. Their words are an inspiration in the struggle against fascist oppression in Turkey; for the democratic rights of the people; for an end to the arrests of those opposed to the discredited military junta, who are in power in Turkey at the present time; and for the immediate release of the many members of the Turkish trades union movement, the peace movement and the Kurdish national

movement, who have been harassed, tortured and jailed.

When you have read this pamphlet, please tell your friends to buy it and get your organisation to order copies. It will be a great weapon in exposing the horrors of the regime in Turkey.

Alf Lomas MEP
3rd May 1983

Introduction

For more than five years the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey has been working to generate solidarity with those oppressed in Turkey. In 1978 it was the trial of the *Ürün* publishers — prosecuted for publishing the programme of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) — which initiated our foundation. In the next two years we were busy publicising the fascisation of the state. Our worst fears were realised with the fascist military coup on 12 September 1980.

Ever since the five generals staged their coup on behalf of finance capital their regime has detained, tortured and sentenced thousands of democrats, progressives, revolutionaries. We estimate that as many as 200,000 have been so detained by the junta's forces since the

coup. Even the junta's own figures show that over 78,000 persons are detained now in the civil prisons: the crush of prison overpopulation will necessitate 48 new civil prisons opening in 1983.

Those on trial or already sentenced have come from a wide spectrum of political opinion and social strata. They range from former MPs from Bülent Ecevit's Republican Peoples Party to partisans of both wings of the Communist Party, from retired diplomats to supporters of Revolutionary Path (Dev-Yol). Amongst the largest and most significant trials are those of trade union activists and leaders. And of special importance is the fact that about half the country's political prisoners are from the Kurdish nation within Turkey's borders.

Turkey's workers, and in fact all its working people, have experienced the rigours of rapid industrialisation in the last twenty or so years. Whereas in the 1950's industry was rudimentary, today close to 50% of Turkey's population live in towns and cities. Many live in the squalor of shanties (gecekondu); in these live over 40% of the population in each of the three largest cities in Turkey — İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir.

Unemployment became an inseparable part of new conditions as impoverished working people from the countryside poured into the cities looking for jobs. It reached and continues at over 20% of the workforce. There is no unemployment benefit in Turkey. Recent reports tell of removals of unemployed persons to their town or village of origin.

Economic difficulties facing Turkey's previous "democratic" governments led to serious erosion of purchasing power such that the lowest depths of poverty began to be plumbed. Body and soul could hardly be kept together, and levels of pay increase began to fall behind inflation rates which climbed over 100% per annum.

DİSK, the Revolutionary Trade Union Confederation, and its constituent unions became the main source of defence for workers in Turkey. After its 5th Congress in 1975 especially, DİSK embarked on a serious onslaught against the employers, and enabled rank and file members to see the need for struggle towards social ownership and control of the means of production. The situation of workers in Turkey demanded this.

DİSK came out against the occupation of the north of Cyprus by

Turkey's armed forces; it came out in favour of world peace; and it declared that socialism was the solution for the ills besetting Turkey's workers. One year after the fascist coup the detained DİSK leaders were put on trial and charged under anti-communist Articles of the Turkish Penal Code (Articles 141 and 142). The indictment cited DİSK's stand on Cyprus, peace and socialism as crimes punishable by *death!* And this continues to be the demand of the prosecutor in the case.

Other DİSK leaders and researchers have been added to the DİSK trial in the 18 months since it started. There are 74 now facing death or long sentences in prison. This is not all, however. 2,000 DİSK activists and shop stewards are still to have their cases brought to trial. 10 individual trade unions have cases against them pending, and again heavy penalties are being demanded.

For some time the junta's military prosecutors have attempted to expose "conspiracies", supposedly perpetrated by various defendants. DİSK statements going back to its foundation in 1968 are prime evidence in the military courts of such "conspiracy". The ugly linking of trials means many defendants face a bewildering series of indictments. This has included placing the chief defence lawyer in the DİSK trial on trial himself together with other captured leaders of the Peace Committee Association.

Conditions for those detained are atrocious. Many times prison protests at torture and maltreatment have been suppressed brutally. Women and men were punished earlier this year by the standard method known as the coffin treatment: placed in long boxes unable to move for days on end. Rape, rape with a stick, electric shocks and beatings are commonplace means for achieving confessions. In fact every conviction is preceded by a session under torture.

The trials are still proceeding. The trade unionists on trial represent strongly the attack on workers by a ruling class afraid of their organised might. The Kurds on trial represent a nation fighting for its very survival against genocide. The trials of political party members show the junta's deep fears of working class ideas and real working class politics, and how a politically conscious working class could threaten their rule.

Most of the rest of the words in this pamphlet came from the mouths of three democrats — British, Kurdish, and Turkish. They

were spoken at CDDRT's STOP THE TRIALS public meeting on 16 April 1983 in Conway Hall, London. Their message is plain for all to see: **join us** in a shout of solidarity that will bring encouragement to the oppressed working people of Turkey and enable them to bring this fascist junta crashing down.

Support with your solidarity our efforts to STOP THE TRIALS and help remove the fascist jackboot from the necks of Turkey's people!





PHOTO: KIZIL BAYRAK

Victory always comes!

by Tony Benn MP

I would like to thank speakers who have spoken up to now for the information that has been given, for the commitment that came out, for the moving poem that we heard and the account of the oppression of the Kurdish people.

For people who have not been to many meetings like this before may I just emphasise what an effect a meeting like this has. First of all, we discover how many of us there are who share this view. The sense of isolation which the media can produce by not reporting very much of what we are saying — that sense of isolation is corrected because we have a meeting where we are all together.

The second thing is that although there may not be a report of this meeting in the Sunday papers in Britain tomorrow — and I

Tony Benn is Member of Parliament for Bristol SE and is a sponsor of CDDRT.

would be surprised if there was, or on Monday — the one thing we can be certain about is that a report of this meeting will be going to two very important groups whom we do not control.

One is, I would be surprised if the Turkish Embassy is not represented here tonight — and do not look suspiciously at your neighbour to find out whether you think he or she might be from the Embassy! Secondly, the intelligence services will be represented here tonight in some way or another. Therefore, the one thing we have is a direct link with powerful people, and as we have that link with powerful people let us be absolutely clear that they get the message right.

Aim of CDDRT

So I begin by reading the objectives of the CDDRT:

“To end military rule, martial law, torture and executions.”

— That’s what we think!

“To release political prisoners.”

— That’s what we are demanding!

“Freedom for all democratic organisations.”

— That’s what this meeting is about!

“To end the national oppression of the Kurds and national minorities.”

— That’s what we are confirming!

“To stop expansionism; end the occupation of Cyprus.”

“To withdraw Turkey from NATO.”

— I will come to that point in a minute!

“No military, political, or economic support for the fascist junta.”

“Totally oppose the political harassment of overseas opponents.”

— We’re trying to protect the speakers here tonight and organise solidarity on that basis!

Now these objectives have got very wide support from the Labour movement in Britain. You have probably seen the list of sponsoring Members of Parliament.

You have had a message tonight from Bill Sirs who is General Secretary of the steel union. There have been many other messages as well and more than that there is the statement that Ernie Roberts quoted from the Labour Programme *The New Hope for Britain*

which was passed overwhelmingly, indeed unanimously, by the Shadow Cabinet that I hope will form a government before this year is out in Britain, and the National Executive Committee that draws its authority from Annual Conference, at which the trade union movement and the Labour Party is fully represented.

Labour's stand

What Ernie did was to read the passage on human rights. I want to read the passage on Turkey itself:

“The Turkish dictatorship is of special concern to Britain given Turkish membership of NATO and its status in Europe. We deplore the Constitution imposed upon the Turkish people and will work for the restoration of freedom and democracy. Until this is achieved we shall oppose assistance to the Turkish junta.”

That has to be taken in conjunction with what we've said in the passage that Ernie quoted: “We will press the suspension from NATO of any dictatorship” and Turkey has been identified in that category.

So that just to sum up that message for the powerful people who are listening to our meeting:

- We support the trade union movement in Turkey!
- We support the peace movement in Turkey!
- We support the Kurdish people!
- We are opposed to the junta!
- We are opposed to their Constitution!
- We are opposed to the arrests, and tortures, the repression, the trials and the militarisation of Turkey!

The figures that I have read in the *Newsletter* are that there are no fewer than 600,000 men in the Turkish Army and they are there, so we are told, for the defence of freedom. In fact, of course, for the **suppression of freedom** in Turkey itself.

This directly concerns us all, because the membership of Turkey in NATO is an indication of our responsibility.

Press neglect of fascist junta

There are other reasons why we should be involved and I want to

come back to them, but if you wonder why there is such massive coverage of what has happened in Poland and no mention, or hardly any mention, in the British press of what has happened in Turkey: it is because if that message were put through the British press so that people in Britain realised that we are supporting the fascist junta then it would undermine the foreign policy that the British government are following. Therefore, that is the reason why we have to come to meetings, to talk amongst ourselves, to listen to speakers, because we will not read about it in the British media.

Of course it is an indication, I might add as well that NATO far from defending freedom everywhere in the world as it pretends to do is prepared to cooperate with any dictatorship however foul, as in the case of Turkey, in order to preserve the interests of those who form the NATO alliance.

Greece, Turkey and USA

One of the aspects of this that is particularly interesting is that of course, for the Greek government which is a left-wing government — Papandreou and PASOK. It is the Turkish threat that has really given them far more concern than any threat to Greece from the Soviet Union. One of the reasons why Papandreou was able to secure a return to democracy and then the election of a PASOK government was that even the Greek military see the main enemy as the Turkish dictatorship and therefore they were prepared to assent to and allow this election of the Papandreou government.

In Turkey there are enormous concentrations of American military weapons. We are having a big campaign in Britain now, as you know, about the Cruise missiles at Greenham Common, about the Pershing, about the Trident and about various other weapons that are to be based here from the United States. These bases — between 60 and 100 American bases in Britain — are nothing to the concentration of American weapons in Turkey. The security of those American weapons depends, so the Pentagon sees it, and the White House sees it, on the maintenance of the dictatorship to see that there is no threat to those forward weapons against the Soviet Union.

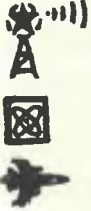
This really is bound to lead us to connect very directly the peace



KEY TO MAP:



NATO early warning and radar attacking station.
 US communications station



US missile and nuclear testing and listening station.
 US nuclear weapons depot.
 NATO air base

quite properly discussed now, is the very nature of a strategy, a world strategy that can in the guise of protecting freedom actually find itself reducing freedom in a country with which we are allied.

US strategy

I won't weary you with a lot of quotations but I have brought some because I think it is important that we should know what the real strategy of the United States is from American sources.

I want to quote the *International Herald Tribune* of April 22, 1982 (one year ago) from New York where Defence Secretary Casper Weinberger has said that "the United States must be prepared to halt and seek to reverse the geographic expansion of Soviet control and military presence."

Now note that "halt and reverse". If you have a military movement here with the peace movement in Turkey itself.

One of the questions which is being widely discussed now and

operation designed to *reverse*, you are actually saying that NATO is not there to *prevent* a Soviet attack upon the West. (And there has never been any evidence of a plan of a Soviet attack upon the West; if there had been you may be sure Mrs. Thatcher would speak of nothing else, and she has never mentioned that!) But also to *reverse* it, and a little later on if you follow this theme through — and I'm now quoting the *International Herald Tribune* from May 22-23, 1982:

“President Reagan has appointed,” and this is from Washington; in an American paper, “a tough new global military, political and diplomatic strategy aimed at shrinking the Soviet Empire and persuading the Kremlin to turn its attention to butter not guns, his top security advisor said last Friday.”

William Clark, Assistant for National Security Affairs, outlined the strategy in a major address at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University and then it goes on to say, “a senior White House official said Mr. Reagan approved an eight-page National Security document that,” and I quote “ ‘undertakes a campaign aimed at internal reform in the Soviet Union and shrinkage in the Soviet Empire’.”

Now these are important things for us to consider. You may say it's a bit remote from the Turkish situation but I'm not so sure it is because if Turkey is the advanced American base in the Middle East and the real aim of American policy is to bring about a “shrinkage of the Soviet Empire and internal reform of the Soviet system,” we find that what we are being told: which is that we have to have all these weapons to prevent the Russians attacking us, is really “We need the weapons to drive the Russians back and to force them to change their own internal policies.”

Now these are very grave considerations which I think must necessarily involve us re-thinking the question of whether we even would want to be a part of a democratic Turkey that was itself instrumental in advancing that American policy. And I put that point to you for your consideration.

Attitudes to Fascism

Now I turn to the next question which is the direct relationship

between what is happening in Turkey and certain trends and tendencies that are occurring here. And do not misunderstand me because I'm not trying to draw any direct or indirect parallel between the junta there and the government in Britain. What I am saying and it is something that we ought to take into account is that the militarisation of British society is a move in a direction which has certain dangers for us.

I do not want to go over the Falklands War all over again but it is quite clear that provided that fascist dictatorship in the Argentine was not threatening British possessions Mrs. Thatcher was quite happy to send them arms. Right up until a few days before Galtieri landed his troops in Port Stanley the British government was supplying military weapons, naval ships to that regime in Buenos Aires.

Then came the war and then came the militarisation of our own society in a way in which, quite apart from the merits of sending the TASK Force instead of using the United Nations (which is what the argument was really about) quite apart from that, statements were made that implied that the spilling of blood in some way revitalised the nation. "Spirit of the British people". Those are very dangerous ideas to play with and then as soon as the war was over it turned out that Mrs. Thatcher was quite prepared that the British banks should supply loans to the Argentine which they are now doing.

The fascist regime in the Argentine is now using British loans to rearm again with Exocet missiles and German warships with components made in British factories. So the militarisation aspect is one that we have to take account of as well.

Moves against trade unions

The next is the attack upon the trade union movement. The trade union movement in Britain is a very strong, very deeply founded movement that goes back over a very long period and has got a solidarity which has survived and will survive even the worst of the recession and the legislation. When Mrs. Thatcher tells us she wants to go back to a Victorian Britain does that mean a Britain where the trade unions are to have no more influence than they had in Victorian times? Is it really that the clock is to be turned back and

the pages of history turned back to the point where women do not have the vote?



Schneiders' garment factory — uniforms 1914-1918

Because in Victorian Britain, women did not have the vote. The trade unions had no real authority. There was no Labour Party in Victorian Britain. Socialism was not really very widely expressed or *allowed* to be expressed in Victorian Britain. So you find in many of the things that are happening in this country, direct warning about what is happening elsewhere.

Troops in Northern Ireland

Now I want to cite one more example about the role of the military in this country. I made a speech about two years ago in which I said that the troops in Northern Ireland were being trained for use in this country. I was very strongly criticized.

I had a letter two days ago from a man I have never met writing to me from Scotland, I will read you his letter. He said, "In February or March 1981 you made a speech in which you stated that the British army was using Northern Ireland as a training ground for troops. You received a great deal of criticism for this but I felt I had read previously statements substantiating your speech... I now have much pleasure in enclosing a copy of *Time* magazine ..." (Now as you know *Time* magazine is not the *Morning Star*, *Time* magazine is

not *Militant* or *Labour Weekly* or *Tribune*, it is the main American business magazine.) “of the 11 September 1972 which bears out what you said.” He sent me a photocopy and I will read it.

Now remember this is not 1982, this is 1972 in an American magazine: “Like everyone else, the 21,000 British soldiers here have learned to live with urban guerrilla warfare. Initially I’m happy about their role as men in the middle. Army officers are now using Northern Ireland as a training ground for what they believe will be the wars of the future.

“In his book, *Low Intensity Operations*, British Brigadier-General Frank Kitson, (now Lieutenant-General and Deputy Commander of United Kingdom Land Forces), expresses the belief that internal subversion and civil war rather than orthodox international war represents the true dangers ahead.

“He believes that Northern Ireland is a perfect place to learn. The Six Counties have become a testing ground for new weapons such as rubber bullets and new tactics such as blocking off the centres of towns.” (which is one of the provisions of the new Police and Criminal Evidence Bill which is before Parliament.)

“The officer corps,” and I’m still quoting *Time* magazine, “of the Army has found that it can live with the situation. ‘This has become the duty of the British Army’, said a colonel who has served in Ulster for 9 months. ‘Nobody wants to miss it’.”

Now the point I am making is one that I hope will be clear. Is it really the Russian government or the British people that they are afraid of? Is it the Russian Army or the Turkish people or the Kurdish people that they are afraid of in Istanbul? Is it perhaps we’ve missed the main message which is that the use of a supposed foreign enemy allows domestic military forces to suppress or prepare to suppress their own people?

Now I do not believe I could say more or less than that in drawing attention to the relevance of our support for the people of Turkey.

- We want solidarity in Turkey!
- We want solidarity in Britain!
- We want international solidarity!

We must not allow the public relations activities of the Turkish junta to mislead us. The fake democracy which they plan to introduce under which, as we have heard, state-approved political

parties are to be allowed to engage in the charade of an election that is designed to confuse, to defuse, to persuade the *Manchester Guardian* to write a more sympathetic leading article about the junta than they would if the crudity of the military repression continued.

Victory always comes!

I want to say one word before I finish. Over many, many years I have attended and participated in meetings just like this. Indeed my earliest memory at the age of six was being taken to see Mr. Gandhi when he came to London for the Round Table Conference. That would be, now, goodness me, 52 years ago.

I was brought up as a supporter at home by my father, of the independence and unity of Ireland, of the freedom of India, of the independence of the new countries which had been colonies of Britain.

I have attended, as many people here must have done, many meetings during the period of fascism in Spain, fascism in Portugal when Salazar and Caetano were in charge, supporting the black leaders in Rhodesia as it was before the elections and the independence of Zimbabwe.

The classic lesson that I have learned over that period is that **victory is going to come**. We had it in Germany, fascism. We had fascism in Italy, Spain, Greece; Turkey now. And always by a combination of determined and united effort by the working class movement in the country concerned, **plus** international solidarity and the support that we are able to give — very remote and indirect support but not without its value — by that combination **victory for democracy and freedom always comes!**

I think it is in that spirit of optimism that we should regard this great rally to **STOP THE TRIALS** tonight.

Comrades, thank you very much.





The fascist junta plays a false game

by M Emin Bozarslan

Dear friends,

First of all I want to thank Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey for giving me the opportunity to talk to you at this important occasion.

I will tell you about ten million people, who suffer one of the hardest racial oppressions of the world today. The people are the Kurdish people, who live in North Kurdistan, that is to say the Turkish part of Kurdistan.

To illustrate the inhuman oppression and to show you the

M Emin Bozarslan is a noted Kurdish writer. He has been imprisoned several times for his work on language and literature. Use of the Kurdish language is illegal in Turkey. He now lives and writes in Sweden.



hardness of it, I just want to give you a few examples. The Kurdish people in North Kurdistan are forbidden even to use their own language. It is completely forbidden by the Turkish regime to publish books, newspapers and magazines in Kurdish. If you do it you will risk a penalty of many years in prison. Millions of Kurdish children cannot be taught in their mother-tongue, Kurdish: At school they are obliged to talk, to read; to write and to be educated in quite a foreign language, namely in Turkish.

The old and rich Kurdish culture and literature is threatened by extermination by the Turkish regime.

A Kurdish person must not even say he is a Kurd. If he does it he may risk years in prison.

Fascist Junta

Since the fascist and racial military coup which took place 12 September 1980, many Kurds were killed by Turkish officers and policemen and thousands of Kurds have been put into Turkish military prisons. The Turkish fascist and racial military junta uses very hard torture methods against the political prisoners. Many of them have lost their lives due to it.

This was a short description of the Turkish racial military regime in Kurdistan. I believe that this description shows enough what kind of a character the regime has.

As a state Turkey has signed the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the European Declaration of Human Rights and the Helsinki Agreement that deals with human rights. That means

that Turkey has accepted and been laid under the obligation of respecting human rights. But the Turkish regime has never respected human rights.

The Turkish racial regime excludes especially for the Kurdish people, all human and democratic dignity and valuation and uses the hardest racial methods against the Kurdish people in the same way that is used by the Zionists against the Palestinians and by the South-African racial regime against the black people of that country. So in practice the Turkish regime commits a great human crime, not only against the Kurdish people, but also against humanity overall.

We believe and we think that a culture and a literature belongs to all people of the whole world. We believe and we think that a culture and a literature has a common human value that belongs to all people of the whole world. We believe and we think that a culture and a literature is a platform where people from different countries and cultures can meet and exchange ideas, become acquainted and feel human dignity.

A great crime

Due to this nobody may crush any culture or exterminate any literature. If somebody does, it is a great inhuman crime. That is why the Turkish regime, especially the fascist military junta of Turkey today, commits an inhuman crime by forbidding the Kurdish culture and literature and by trying to exterminate them. It is a crime not only to the Kurdish people but also to humanity.

The Turkish regime not only uses inhuman oppression against the Kurdish people, but also against Turkish democrats who defend the human rights of the Kurds and who are enemies of the racial politics of the regime. The author and sociologist Dr. İsmail Beşikçi is an obvious example of that. Dr. Beşikçi is a Turkish scientist who has been writing several books about the bad situation of the Kurdish people. Therefore he has been imprisoned many times. In 1980 he wrote to the Writers' Organisation in Switzerland criticising the oppression of the Turkish regime against the Kurdish people. His penalty for that letter was that the Turkish military junta condemned him to ten years in prison and five years of exile. So in total fifteen years just for a letter. How is it possible



that such things are signs of humanity and democracy! But as I said, when it is about the Kurdish people and the Kurdish question, there are no limits for the Turkish regime.

Dear friends,

The Turkish regime tries to hide its fascist, racial and cruel face behind a democratic and human mask in front of other countries, in order to show democracy and a humane regime, and in that way cheats democratic countries, democratic and human organisations abroad, especially in Europe.

Today the fascist, racial and terroristic junta has put on such a mask to hide its bloody and cruel face. The military junta plays a false game maintaining it is going back to democracy. This game is going on just to cheat the opinion of the world and to weaken its pressure. One must not believe in such a game. It is quite a false one.

The military junta even plans to allow false political parties to be formed. The generals are planning an election, too. Maybe the generals of the military junta then will take off their uniforms, putting on civil clothes instead.

But such a regime will resemble the former Portuguese civil fascist regime of Salazar and Caetano. In Turkey the generals now are forming and formulating such a regime and they are approaching the European countries by saying: "Look here! We have returned to democracy." One must never believe in such a game of double morality.

Real democracy

Democracy is not just that people are allowed to vote and that some political pseudo-parties are to be formed. Democracy is much more — among other things — freedom to think, to believe, to express oneself in writing, to build organisations. This concerns especially the Kurdish people. There will be no democracy by continuing crushing the Kurdish language, Kurdish literature and Kurdish culture. We want our European friends not to believe in the civil clothes of the military junta and its false democratic game.

In spite of all kinds of oppression the Kurdish people will go on fighting against the inhuman and undemocratic Turkish regime until we have got all our rights. The struggle, however, is not directed against the Turkish people. The Kurds are not fighting against the Turks. On the contrary, they are supporting the Turkish people, its democratic organisations and its fight for democracy against the fascist military junta and the racial regime.

We believe and we think that the Kurds and the Turks, all people of the whole world, can come to know each other as friends, if we are fighting for an aim, namely a common and equal platform to stand on. We are fighting for that aim.

My friends,

Finally, I want to read one of my poems, which is called *Don't Crush Our Flowers*. The flowers are symbolizing the Kurdish language, culture and literature, that are all forbidden in Kurdistan.

(Emin Bozarslan ended his speech with a moving rendition of his poem *Don't Crush Our Flowers* in English, Turkish and Kurdish — ed.)



The world's only banned ABC book was published in 1968. Alfabe is the only Kurdish ABC in Latin characters in North Kurdistan. He was imprisoned for four months for writing it.

Don't Crush Our Flowers

We have flowers too
like you
Our flowers are beautiful too
like yours
We want our flowers
our red, white, yellow flowers
to look beautiful and fair
on our green earth

We want to plant our flowers
in the garden of the world
and let the world see our flowers
We want our flowers to grow
beside yours
But you don't want to
You want to crush our flowers
And you always crush
our red, white, yellow flowers
on our green earth
Why?
Why do you crush them with barbarity
and hostility

Listen
Listen you cruel, wild one
Don't crush our flowers
They belong to us
They belong to our children
They belong to all people
in the whole world
They even belong to you
Do you understand?
But you don't understand
What shall I do?
to make you understand?
To make you understand
what shall I do?





PHOTO: KIZIL BAYRAK

Working class of Turkey on trial

by *Aydın Meriç*

(*Assistant General Secretary, DİSK*)

Comrade Chairman, esteemed Members of the British Parliament, comrades and friends.

May I first of all express my gratitude to the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey for being asked to address this honourable meeting. I would have liked to address you in English seeing that so many of our guests are British but the desire to express myself more fluently prevailed; therefore I beg your understanding.

After I left Turkey I frequently met with the following question

Aydın Meriç was appointed Assistant General Secretary of DİSK following the 5th Congress in 1975. He went into hiding in 1978 following a press campaign against him and Kemal Türkler, DİSK President. He recently escaped from Turkey.

when I met with our friends from other countries: "Why should what is happening in Turkey concern us?" They are justified in asking this question because Turkey is only one of 160 countries in the world and is neither the only nor the first country in the world to suffer under a brutal totalitarian regime. On the other hand, there are very good reasons for the people of other countries to concern themselves with what is happening to the people and democratic forces of Turkey.

With a population of 50 million, straddling two continents, surrounded by three seas, Turkey is geographically located at a very critical point where the two world systems confront each other. Neither can Turkey be ignored from the economic viewpoint. Although it's less developed than the highly developed countries of the West it is not very backward in terms of the material foundations of economic production. Despite its rapidly-increasing population, Turkey is one of the few countries in the world which does not have to import its own food requirements.

All these are factors which force the attention of other nations on to Turkey. These, we must add of course, from the point of view of our European friends, that Turkey whether we like it or not, geographically, culturally, and through its social and economic links is very much a part of Europe. Therefore, all these objective factors coupled with humanitarian considerations force us to turn our attentions towards this country.

Recent developments in Turkey

The junta continues to flagrantly violate even the minimum of human rights which find expression in the United Nations Charter on Human Rights and in the European Human Rights Convention.

The most basic human rights of freedom of conscience, freedom of organisation and trade union rights, including the right to strike and collective wage bargaining, are non-existent.

The junta continues to wage repression and terror against the people. The main forms which this repression and terror take are the following:

1. Mass arrests, investigations and show trials. 200,000 people have been arrested since the junta came to power, of which 100,000 are

still in prison.

2. Torture continues unabated. Not a day passes without our hearing about another death through torture. The total number of people who have died under torture to date is 150. Some I knew personally.
3. The conditions under which political prisoners and detainees are held are incompatible with human dignity. Their physical surroundings are unspeakable. They are deprived access to lawyers and to their families. Only two weeks ago all 1,200 prisoners being held at Metris Military Prison in İstanbul were denied the right to receive visitors indefinitely.

Fascist brainwashing

The prisoners and detainees are subjected to a constant fascist indoctrination programme. They are forced to read certain fascist books and to sing chauvinist, racist marches and shout racist slogans.

4. Repression at shop floor level has reached unimaginable proportions. All trade union militants and officials in the work places have been sacked and the flood of workers who have lost their jobs for political reasons numbers in the tens of thousands.
5. Systematic terror is waged against members of other nationalities in Turkey and in particular against the Kurds. The programme of forced assimilation has been stepped up.
6. Economic terror against the working people has reached an intolerable level. Even according to official statistics the real wages of workers has fallen in the past three years to the level of 20 years ago. Today the labour power of Turkey's workers is among the cheapest in the world market.

If you will allow me I would also like to briefly dwell on the trials which are continuing. These trials can be roughly grouped into five categories:

1. **The trials of political parties and groups.**
2. **The trials of Kurdish parties and groups.**
3. **The trials of professional associations.**
4. **The trials of trade unions.**
5. **The trial of the Peace Committee.**

DISK Trial

Among the trade union trials the DİSK Trial holds a special place. The latest situation with regard to this trial is as follows. There is the main DİSK Trial in which 78 defendants are on trial, 67 for their lives. Another 80 people, among them myself, are on the wanted list in connection with this trial.

Then there are the trials of individual unions affiliated to DİSK. At the latest count a total of 300 leaders of ten trade unions are being prosecuted. Finally there are a large number of trade union officials and militants who have yet to be formally charged in court.

What makes the DİSK Trial any different from the others, I hear you ask? Well, the DİSK Trial, I believe, has two aspects. The first is the obvious one. The necessity of freeing the trade union officials and militants on trial. The second aspect is the need to stand up against the attempt to try the true defendants of this trial, that is, the working class of Turkey itself and its most active and militant trade union movement.

Terrorism

There is a particular argument which the junta delights putting forward since the 12 September 1980 — terrorism. The junta ostensibly came to power to prevent terrorism, but is that really the case?



It is quite true that people did fall victim to terrorism before the 12 September. There is no need to go very far. I can give you three examples from DİSK. In 1976, Muammer Çetinbaş a worker at the Tofaş Fiat automobile works in Bursa was brutally murdered. The killers? The fascists! In 1977 the half million strong May Day rally in İstanbul was attacked from outside and over 40 people were killed. The killers? The Counter-Guerrilla Department of the General Staff!



*Kemal Türkler, murdered
President of DİSK
(Revolutionary Trade Union
Confederation) and
Maden-İş (Metal Workers'
Union).*

In the immediate run-up to the fascist military take-over, in June 1980, the founder and President for 13 years of DİSK, Kemal Türkler was brutally murdered. Again, his killers were the Counter-Guerrilla!

The Chief of General Staff during this period was none other than *Kenan Evren*, the head of the junta.

Another junta member, Nurettin Ersin was first Head of the National Intelligence Organisation and later Head of the Army.

The notorious Counter-Guerrilla which played such a direct role in these massacres was directly attached to the Deputy Chief of the General Staff.

Legalised Terror

What about after the 12 September? Has terror stopped? No, the terror has not stopped. It has only become legalised. It has been transformed into systematic terror of the state.

Here are a few figures. Death sentences have been demanded for 5,000 people since the 12th of September. 150 of these have been approved. 40 people have already been hanged. A further 600 people have been brutally murdered by security forces in the streets or in their homes. There are 100,000 political prisoners in military prisons. Now who can claim that terrorism has stopped?

Junta's fairy tale — return to democracy

Having summarised the situation thus, let us pass on to another current issue. The junta's fairy tale of transition to democracy. As you are probably aware, the efforts to disguise the present fascist regime in Parliamentary clothing (without, however, altering its essential features) is continuing under the pretext of a "transition to democracy".

A non-democratic totalitarian Constitution has been forced on the people. It is worth mentioning that 4 million voters between the ages 18-21 were banned from participation in the anti-democratic Referendum which simultaneously approved the Constitution and the Head of State. A further 3 million voters abstained altogether. Despite the repression 2 million voters voted No.

Under the new Constitution the present junta will continue to wield power for 7 years after the so-called "transition to democracy". Most important of all, the Constitution is based on a principle which directly contradicts democracy. Legislative, executive and judicial power are all united in the hands of the government.

On the basis of this Constitution all areas of political and social life are being turned into institutions of the fascist state in civilian clothing. The education system has been completely changed. The universities and schools have been entirely purged of all democratic elements.

The judiciary has been stripped of its independence. Thousands have been banned from participation in political life altogether. Censorship has become legalised on all forms of media and communication.



New laws

Now a new series of laws are in the pipeline. Most important of these are the Political Parties and Election Act and the Trade Union Strikes and Collective Bargaining Acts. Circles close to the junta have more or less openly declared that the proposed parties and trade unions will be no more than departments of the State. The concept of a State Party is being openly discussed.

This morning (16 April 1983 — *ed*), the junta's spokesman in the Consultative Assembly, announced the Draft Election Law. You will see for yourselves when you read it that if this becomes law, the parties which are allowed will not only not be allowed to win an election but will not even be allowed to participate in an election. This opportunity is reserved solely for the State Party.

The head of the fascist junta Kenan Evren speaks about passing to a certain measure of democracy on the one hand but on the other hand says that this democracy will not resemble those of Western countries. He says, "Turkey has certain peculiar features." This statement is a grave insult not only to the people of Turkey but to all mankind, and to the concept of democracy.

Dear friends, we are fully aware of our responsibilities. We will put an end to these crimes against humanity in Turkey. We will establish a democracy through the free will of the people themselves which finds expression in all areas of political, economic and social life.



PHOTO- YEŞİL YILDIZ KOOP



PHOTO YEŞİL YILDIZ KOOP

International solidarity

We are aware of the difficulties in realising this task solely relying on our own resources. For this reason we need, now more than ever, international solidarity. We need solidarity at every level and in every form.

We see that this is no easy task either. In the first place, as I mentioned before, Turkey is not the only country run by fascist or totalitarian regimes. Secondly, at this difficult and complex juncture of the international situation the tendency to evaluate regimes according to their foreign policies and to ignore their internal policies predominates.

Despite these unfavourable conditions five European countries, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Holland, and France have risked souring relations with Turkey and have openly declared that human rights are being systematically violated there. They have taken the matter to the European Court of Human Rights.

We also note with satisfaction the positive stand which British democratic public opinion is taking in regard to Turkey. The fact that the question is receiving such wide interest from the Member of the British Parliament is proof of the scale of the solidarity. I would like to mention the role and achievements of the CDDRT, in particular, with admiration.

I am sure that the democratic forces of Britain will continue to raise their solidarity with the people and democratic forces of Turkey and to help to topple the blight on humanity that is fascism — in Turkey as well. Thank you for your attention.



PHOTO: KIZIL BAYRAK



Stop the Trials rally, 16 April 1983, Conway Hall, London

CONSTITUTION OF CDDRT

1. The name of the organisation shall be the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey (CDDRT).
2. The aims of CDDRT are as follows:
 - End military rule, martial law, torture and executions.
 - Release of political prisoners.
 - Freedom for all democratic organisations.
 - End national oppression of the Kurds and national minorities.
 - Stop expansionism; end the occupation of Cyprus.
 - Withdraw Turkey from NATO and close all NATO bases.
 - No military, political or economic support for the fascist junta.
 - Totally oppose junta harassment of overseas opponents.
 - Organise solidarity on the basis of the foregoing utilising every means at our disposal.
3. Organisations and individuals accepting the aims of CDDRT can apply to affiliate. Such applications are subject to the approval of the General Council. Affiliation fees shall be set by the General Council and become payable from 1 January each year.
4. Congress is the highest body of CDDRT and shall meet every two years. It shall consist of delegates from Branches and affiliated organisations, and individual affiliates. Congress shall elect the General Council and consider reports and motions. The conduct of business shall be on the basis of Standing Orders approved by Congress. Pre-Congress arrangements are the responsibility of the retiring General Council. Each Congress shall decide the size of the General Council.
5. The General Council is the continuing body of Congress and shall meet quarterly. It shall appoint the Executive Committee which is responsible to it. The General Council shall have the right to co-option.
6. The Executive Committee shall consist of the General Secretary and such other members as the General Council may decide. The Executive Committee shall meet weekly and be responsible for the day to day work of CDDRT.
7. Local Branches of CDDRT are formed with the approval of the General Council.
8. This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority at a Congress.
9. The General Council may call, or upon request by two-thirds of affiliated national organisations shall call, a Special Congress.

Affiliate to CDDRT

Organisations and individuals accepting the aims of CDDRT (see Constitution) are eligible for affiliation. Annual affiliation fees are: national organisation £25, local organisation £10, individual £6.

I/we* wish to continue*/apply for* affiliation to CDDRT and enclose a cheque/PO for £

Name

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*Delete as applicable.

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