

TURKEY NEWSLETTER



Monthly publication of the Committee for
Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey

Issue 53

June 1985

LET RUHI SU GO!



The Evren-Özal regime is denying Ruhi Su permission to leave Turkey.

Ruhi Su is one of Turkey's most popular folk singers and player of the Saz (the traditional string instrument). His songs, based on the Turkish folk tradition are imbued with humanist and progressive ideas.

He is also held in high regard by the Turkish community in Europe, playing to a packed concert in London in 1978-two years before the military coup in Turkey.

Ruhi Su has spent a considerable portion of his life being harassed by repressive regimes. A close friend of Turkey's most famous poet Nazım Hikmet he was arrested and imprisoned in 1952 for his progressive views. Since the coup he has been unable to leave Turkey. The regime cannot forgive him for his stirring songs which helped rouse people to fight for freedom in the 1970s.

Ruhi Su is now 73 years old, medical advice requires that he come to western Europe for treatment. His application for a passport to leave Turkey has been turned down by the regime.

Amongst progressive and cultural circles in Europe protests have already been raised against this persecution. In Britain and the USA we too must let the regime in Turkey know how we view their despicable action and demand that Ruhi Su be given immediate permission to travel.

Ruhi Su's health is in serious danger unless he can leave Turkey. We therefore call on all who hold human rights dear to protest at this act and demand; let Ruhi Su go!

MAY DAY 1985



As has become a long-standing tradition the CDDRT joined other Turkish organisations including the Union of Turkish Workers and the Union of Turkish Women in Britain in the London May Day march. The large and colourful Turkish contingent raised the call for democracy in Turkey, an end to the deportation of migrant and refugee workers from Britain and solidarity with the working class in Britain.

CROYDON MARCH

For the first time this year the CDDRT participated in the May Day march in Croydon organised by the Croydon Trades Council on the 27th April.

Despite poor weather there was a good turnout for the march and the CDDRT was able to take the issue of the denial of democracy in Turkey to the people of Croydon.

Following the march there was a brief meeting at which a CDDRT representative brought greetings. The meeting closed with a performance from the Union of Turkish Workers folk dance group.



FIKRI SÖNMEZ PICKET

The CDDRT participated in a picket of the Turkish Embassy called to protest at the death in suspicious circumstances of Fikri Sönmez the imprisoned mayor of Fatsa.

Jeremy Corbyn MP, the leader of Camden Council and a

representative of Hackney Council after much difficulty managed to hand in a letter to the Embassy protesting at the death of Fikri Sönmez and calling for an independent medical commission from Europe to be allowed to carry out a post-mortem and examine the health of the surviving Fatsa prisoners.

MAYOR OF FATSA DIES IN PRISON

A Military communique has announced that Fikri Sönmez, Mayor of Fatsa died in prison of a heart attack on 4th of May. Despite request from his family and Amnesty International for a post-mortem the military authorities hastily buried him the next day.

Fikri Sönmez had been in detention since the 12th September 1980 coup. He had been repeatedly subjected to solitary confinement and torture. Fikri Sönmez was the

democratically elected mayor of the small Black Sea town of Fatsa. Along with one thousand fellow townspeople he was arrested by the army when they occupied the town before the actual coup and dissolved Fatsa's municipal council.

Today 740 Fatsa citizens are still on trial, over 260 of whom are being threatened with the death penalty.

To prevent any more 'accidental' deaths it is essential that political show trials be ended and all political prisoners given an amnesty.

BOSPORUS BRIDGE

The lucrative contract to build the second bridge across the Bosphorus at Istanbul has been won by a consortium of companies including the Japanese firms Mitsubishi Industries and Nippon Kokkan and led by Sezai-Turkes-Feyzi Akkaya of Istanbul. Stiff competition from a British dominated consortium failed, leading Trade and Industry Secretary Norman Tebbit to accuse Japan of unfair competition.

According to reports the extra item which persuaded the Özal regime to accept the Japanese bid was the offer by the Japanese government of a direct loan to the Turkish government of £169 million reported to be repayable at 5% over 25 years with a seven-year grace period.

EVREN SPEAKS

On April 28 'President' Evren made one of his 'classic' speeches only notable for its wild claims on the question of torture. Apart from blaming all Turkey's problems on Armenian terrorists Evren said "Torture does not exist in Turkey". He said those abroad who hold the opposite view were "when in Turkey talking only to prisoners and obtaining the views of those against the 12th September operation."

On Armenia, Evren said there is no Armenian problem in Turkey; what was in question "was merely the transfer, in 1913, of some citizens from the theatre of war to other regions in the Ottoman Empire due to a massacre committed by Armenians. That is it."

Regarding the question of imprisoning people for their opinions, Evren said "There is no such crime as offence of opinion in the Turkish Penal Code. What they mean is Articles 141 and 142 of the same. In other words those founding organisations or becoming members of organisations and making propaganda in order to establish communism."

WORD PURGE

205 words have been banned from use on TV or Radio in Turkey.

Over the years successive governments in Turkey have followed a policy of replacing certain words (mainly Arabic and Persian) with "pure" Turkish words. This has led to a situation where many people can roughly be defined as 'conservative' or 'progressive' by the words they use. The

recent ban by the regime is seen as a reversal of the trend. Among the words banned are many associated with progressive tendencies during the revolutionary situation of the 1970s.

NATO EXERCISES

Turkey has recently been involved in two major NATO exercises. The first called 'Deterrent Force 1/85'. This consisted of naval and sea borne assault manoeuvres. The exercises began in April and are scheduled to end on May 28. Besides Turkey, Italy, USA, Britain, Spain and France took part. The exercise was commanded by a Turkish naval commander. As part of NATO's 'Distant Hammer-85' exercise, operations took place in the Aegean and Mediterranean between May 7 and May 17 involving Turkish, Dutch, US, Italian, French and British forces.

TURKEY AND STAR WARS

According to a statement by Defence Minister Yavuztürk, Turkey looks set to participate in Reagan's 'Star Wars' project.

Already a leading Turkish scientist Ahmet Erbil is working in the USA on part of the project.

AMNESTY

In an interview with foreign journalists reported by Turkish press agencies on 2nd May, N. Karaduman, Speaker of the 'Grand National Assembly' (parliament) said "Turkey is a country which still feels uneasy about past events: Hence, she wants to build on firm foundations. She is acting carefully so as not to allow these bitter days to return".

Karaduman said a "by-election will be held in June of next year for vacant seats in the GNA, in which all political parties in Turkey could participate." He went on to state that the GNA would pass an amnesty law for prisoners "when circumstances permit".

To avoid pressure on the Amnesty question the regime has passed a law allowing political prisoners to be freed if they "sincerely repent" their deeds and give information.

Any information a political prisoner might have possessed in 1980 would now probably be irrelevant. The real purpose of the law is to allow the authorities to release a few prisoners if international pressure mounts and at the same time smear such prisoners and try to create confusion in the ranks of

democrats by implying they have 'talked' or collaborated with the regime.

IMPORTANT VISIT

On May 15 President Mubarak of Egypt began the first visit by an Egyptian head of state to Turkey for 70 years.

This visit is seen as very important both by Egypt and the Evren-Özal regime. For Turkey Egypt can play a considerable role in assisting Turkish capital to penetrate Middle East markets and to promote itself as an acceptable regional superpower amongst Arab countries.

Some of the significance of the visit was shown by David Barchard writing in the *Financial Times* when he wrote: "Both countries maintain diplomatic links with Israel and receive considerable US aid. Since 1979, Turkey has replaced Iran as the US's closest military and strategic partner in the region, though it has consistently tried to remain on good terms with all Middle East countries."

President Mubarak is being given the full red carpet treatment by the Turks, but the immediate results of the visit are likely to be confined to greater economic and cultural co-operation. Turkey's economy is substantially more advanced than Egypt's and there have been several minor Turkish investments in Egyptian industry.

The two countries are likely to cooperate closely in Islamic forums from now on. In 1984, Turkey played an important part in getting Egypt readmitted to the Islamic Conference — something the Egyptians have not forgotten.

The Gulf War and efforts to end it are expected to be discussed during the talks, with Egypt perhaps privately asking Turkey to step up economic assistance to Iraq."

On his arrival Mubarak emphasised Turkey's importance as a "bridge between the Middle East and the West". He is expected to request Turkey to support a joint initiative by the PLO, Egypt and Jordan to try and resolve the "Palestinian problem".

Turkey is interested in gaining Egypt's support over the Cyprus, Aegean and Bulgarian questions. Discussions are taking place on the sale of Phantom jets 'surplus to requirements' by Egypt to Turkey and of ammunition by Turkey to Egypt.



FIGHTING CONTINUES IN KURDISTAN

Associated Press (AP) report that five Turkish soldiers were killed in clashes with Kurdish Guerrillas in the eastern province of Bitlis.

Reports have appeared in the press that Turkish troops have been massing on the border with Syria. At the same time rumours are rife that a joint Turkish-Iraqi offensive is being prepared against Kurdish bases in Northern Iraq. Concern is being expressed for the fate of the estimated 50,000 Kurdish refugees in the area should Turkey attack.

The Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* of 14th May 1985 carried pictures such as the one above of Kurdish fighters killed by the Turkish army. The clash took place on the 15th May near the town of Çemişkezek. Three Kurdish guerrillas were surrounded by the army and shot when they refused to surrender, according to reports.



TURKEY – BULGARIA

In Turkey the press and, after some hesitation, the regime have been conducting a campaign of increasing stridency in connection with events in Bulgaria concerning the position of the Turkish minority there. In connection with these events, the Özal regime even permitted the first big political street demonstration in İstanbul since the 1980 coup.

In a truly amazing statement Turkish Foreign Ministry officials protesting at the 'plight' of Turks in Bulgaria claimed "Turkey has an honourable past concerning national minorities. She can be proud of the way she treated them.

Anyone complaining about the status of minorities in Turkey established under the Lausanne Treaty, is free to come, ..." Of course, anyone enquiring about the condition of the huge Kurdish population will not be so welcome!

Suddenly the supporters of the regime in Turkey have begun to champion the rights of Turks in Bulgaria demanding that they be allowed to speak their own language, practice their religion, have their own schools and keep their names as guaranteed by the Bulgarian constitution.

On this issue one thing must be clear to all democrats. The regime in Turkey and the forces which back it are in no position to talk to anyone about the rights of 'national minorities'.

Within the territory of Turkey 9 million Kurds have been denied all rights for at least 50 years. Their very existence is denied — officially they are 'mountain Turks'. Writing an ABC book in Kurdish means imprisonment, speaking the Kurdish language is a crime, calling for self determination can mean death.

At the very time when the regime is shedding crocodile tears over the plight of Bulgarian Turks, their army is carrying-out military operations and savage reprisals against Kurds in Turkey's 'eastern provinces'. The old proverb about people in glass houses not throwing stones fully applies to the current regime in Turkey.

While the Turkish regime demands 'national rights' for the minority in Bulgaria, in Turkey 84 members of the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK) are on trial for demanding similar rights for Kurds in Turkey. At this trial in Diyarbakır the prosecution is demanding death for fifteen of the accused.

THE PARTIES MANOEUVRE

In April at the Motherland Party (ANAP) Congress, Özal retained control of the party leadership — despite mounting criticism. The congress approved the 40-name recommended list for the new party executive committee prepared by Özal. For Özal retaining his grip on the party was easier than trying to present ANAP as anything more than a coalition of banned pre-1980 coup parties masquerading under a new name.

The fact is that none of the major banned political parties or their former political leaders — all of whom are supposed to be officially non-persons — have gone away. Legal political life in Turkey is increasingly dominated by the struggle of new politicians to find patronage from the banned 'elder statesmen'.

Özal, whose party is largely controlled by members of the former Nationalist Action Party (NAP) and Nationalist Salvation Party (Islamic fundamentalists) has ridden out the storm — this time. To do this he ditched M. Sivgin architect of ANAP's 1983 election campaign and other supporters of the pro-fascist NAP from the leadership — temporarily, while relying more on his National Salvation wing and 'independents'.

As Özal staggers from scandal (such as the resignation of a junior Minister over allegations of accepting a £50,000 bribe) to economic crisis — monetarist policies fail to control inflation — the other parties step into the limelight.

LAWS THAT ARE LOSING THEIR MEANING

May 15-16 saw the revealing congress of the alternative right-wing party the Correct Way Party (DYP).

Mehmet Yazar, former leader of the chambers of Industry, as we predicted in the last *Turkey Newsletter*, mounted a

strong challenge for the leadership but was defeated by Hüsamettin Cindoruk 626 votes to 262.

The former DYP leader Avcı had withdrawn his candidature complaining of "pressure" but pledged to support Cindoruk saying "I won't give this party to anyone except he to whom it belongs", taken to be a reference to Demirel, Prime Minister before the 1980 coup and a banned politician.

Demirel is making an blatant bid to return to politics despite the laws which prohibit this. It was openly acknowledged that Yazar had the backing of 'President' Evren but lost the election because this lost him Demirel's support.

Even on the right the mood has swung against the junta laws restricting politicians. The delegates to the DYP congress sang "Come Demirel Come" in a paraphrase of a song currently popular in Turkey. And Yavuz Donat in *Tercüman* of May 16 compared Demirel to Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent saying "The absence of the Magnificent was more effective than his presence". Going on he called for an end to the bans on former politicians — "Why is there a need for laws which are losing their meaning every day."

Both ANAP and DYP congresses were marked by scenes reminiscent of pre-1980 political life with punch-ups on the floor of congress being used to emphasize political disagreements. At Özal's ANAP congress a press photographer received a severe beating from delegates. At the DYP congress it was the turn of Nazlı Ilıcak — outspoken conservative journalist to be mobbed by delegates and roughly handled by party stewards.

Political life is breaking out of the boundaries laid down by Evren and the military. The unity of those sections of society who supported the 1980 coup is now well and truly at an end.

TOBACCO WORKERS PROTEST



Turkish Finance Minister Alptemocin and Health & Social Security Minister Aydın had a nasty surprise when they visited a Black Sea tobacco factory owned by TEKEL — the state monopoly. Workers turned out to demonstrate. They confronted the Ministers with demands for better health and safety at work and an end to the system whereby workers who

had worked seven years and more at the same factory still had no status or job security and were classed as 'seasonal workers'.

When called on to provide cast-iron assurances that their grievances will be resolved, Minister Aydın said "We promise to do what is necessary".

FROM THE PRESS



This cartoon appeared in a legal satiric magazine in Turkey *Girgir*. It appeared in the week before May 1 and refers to the suppression of May Day marches since 1980.

The worker is saying "this calendar has no 1st of May."

That such a cartoon could be published legally at all in Turkey demonstrates how the situation is changing.

TURKISH ENVOY WALKS OUT

on 26th April the *Financial Times* carried the following report.

Turkey's representative to the Council of Europe, Mrs Filiz Dimçmen, walked out of a ministerial meeting in Strasbourg when Turkey was denied presidency of the 21 nation body, AP reports.

The committee of ministers decided the previous night to shelve Turkey's request for the six month rotating presidency for at least another year. The request, made on Turkey's behalf by Herr Hans Dietrich Genscher, the West Germany Foreign Minister, did not win the required 11 votes in the committee.

The key opposition is understood to have come from Mme Catherine Lalumiere, French Secretary for European Affairs. Greece and the Scandinavian countries also voted against.

Turkey withdrew its Foreign Minister from the committee last autumn when the presidency went to West Germany and later threatened to recall its representative here if the request was denied again.

TURKEY-IMF EFFORT TO REACH STAND-BY ACCORD ABANDONED

Turkey and the International Monetary Fund have abandoned attempts to seek a new stand-by agreement for 1985-86 after two months of talks. Negotiations are expected to resume in the late summer and will presumably focus on the prospects for 1986.

Turkey's last one-year stand-by agreement with the IMF expired early last month. Though stand-by assistance, around \$225m last year, is no longer important to the country's overall balance of payments position, there must be some disquiet at the apparent rift with the Fund.

Since 1980, Mr Turgut Özal, the Turkish Prime Minister, has emerged as a dutiful disciple of the Fund's policies and Turkey has been regarded as something of a test case for IMF programmes. Now, it seems that Mr Özal and the Fund have fallen out, as many other governments have done, in a dispute over the need for growth.

The Fund is believed to have pressed Turkey to take immediate measures to cut its budget deficit and to lower its growth targets in order to help improve the current account balance.

Last year there was a budget deficit of TL 9,000bn (£14bn), the equivalent of 5 per cent of gross national product. Turkey believes that measures already taken will reduce this to 1 per cent of GNP this year and so help bring down inflation. At 53 per cent in 1984, this was double target levels.

The current account was \$1.4bn (£1.1bn) in deficit last year and is likely to run at a comparable level in 1985.

The Government believes that high growth rates are needed to prevent Turkey's social problems, notably a 2.3 per cent birthrate and 20 per cent unemployment, getting out of hand.

However, despite 4.7 per cent gross national product growth last year, inflation was approximately double target levels at 53 per cent.

This article first appeared in the *Financial Times*, May 16.

65 YEAR OLD WOMAN SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS

On May 17 it was announced that the Yeni Çeltek trial has ended. The trial was of 901 miners and others accused by the 3rd Army Martial Law Commander of occupying a coal mine before the 1980 coup and being members of THKP-C (Turkish Peoples' Liberation Party-Front and Dev-Yol (Revolutionary Path)).

1 of the accused has been sentenced to death, 12 to life imprisonment, 608 to sentences ranging from 20 to 1 years and 261 were released.

Amongst those sentenced to 20 years imprisonment was Elif Korkmaz a 65 year old woman (from *Hürriyet* 17th May).



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

If you want to do more to assist the struggle for genuine democracy in Turkey there are several ways you can help. You, or an organisation to which you belong, can affiliate to the CDDRT. You can take extra copies of *Turkey Newsletter* to distribute to friends and colleagues or raise the issue of Turkey in your Trade Union, Party Branch etc... The CDDRT can provide speakers.

Join or help establish local branches in your area.

If you live within reach of London you can participate in the work of the Executive Committee.

The CDDRT has a limited number of cassettes of famous revolutionary songs from Turkey. Price £3.20 including p+p.

Payment with order. Cheques/POs should be made payable to CDDRT.

CONSTITUTION OF THE CDDRT

1. The name of the organisation shall be the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey (CDDRT).

2. The aims of the 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 the 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 the 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 the 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 at least fortnightly and be responsible for the day to day work of the CDDRT.

7. Local Branches of the 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.

CDDRT General Council

- Bedir AYDEMİR
- Richard BALFE, MEP
- John M BLOOM
- Philip BRAY
- Sandra HODGSON
- Aif LOMAS, MEP
- Alan SAPPER
- Aydın MERİÇ
- Sian NIWIENS, MEP
- Ernie ROBERTS, MP
- Faik SINKİL
- Marion SARAFI
- Peter SPALDING
- Tijen UĞURİŞ
- Martin UPHAM
- Bob WRIGHT
- and one representative each from:
- Turkish Students' Federation in the UK
- Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain
- Union of Turkish Women in Britain
- Union of Turkish Workers

Sponsors include

- Peter Archer QC MP
- Joe Ashton MP
- Norman Atkinson MP
- Tony Banks MP
- Guy Barnett MP
- Margaret Beckett MP
- Tony Benn MP
- Andrew Bennett MP
- Syd Bidwell MP
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- Ernie Ross MP
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- Stan Cole AUEW NC
- NUPE
- NUPE Northern Ireland Div
- NUPE West Midlands Div
- NUR Manchester
- Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance
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- UCATT London Region
- UCATT NW Region
- Greater London Association of Trades Councils
- Groydon Trades Council
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- Gloucester Trades Council
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- Hackney Trades Council
- Kingsion & Dist Trades Council
- Leeds Trades Council
- Cities of London & Westminster Trades Council
- Preston Trades Council
- Rotherham Trades Council
- Stockport Trades Council
- Waltham Forest Trades Council
- GEC Openshaw JSSC
- Union of Turkish Workers
- Beckenham CLP

- Bermondsey CLP
- Chelmsford CLP
- Greenwich CLP
- Hazelgrove CLP
- High Peak CLP
- Keighley CLP
- Walthamstow CLP
- Wigan CLP
- Labour Party Young Socialists
- National Organisation of Labour Students
- Forening For Progressive Fr Tyrkia
- Iraqi Students' Society UK (Branch of GUSIR)
- KNE (Communist Youth of Greece) org. in Britain
- Kurdish Students Society in Europe (UK)
- Communist Party of Portugal (org. in Britain)
- Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain
- Turkish Students' Federation in the UK
- City of London Polytechnic Students' Union
- Cyprus Students' Society - Manchester University
- Leeds University Union
- UMIST Students' Union
- Manchester Poly Students' Union
- Manchester University SU
- Teesside Polytechnic Students' Union
- Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation
- Demokrat Norway
- Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers
- London CRS Political Committee
- Frank Allaun
- Lord Fenner Brockway
- Alan Bush
- Bob Cryer
- Arthur Davidson QC
- Frank Hooley
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- Lord Jenkins of Putney
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- Arthur Latham
- Ken Livingstone
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- Sheila Wright

Affiliate to the CDDRT

Annual affiliation fees are: national organisation £25, local organisation £10, individual £6.

To the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey.

I/we* wish to affiliate to the CDDRT and enclose a cheque/PO for £

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Address
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CYPRUS REFERENDUM

Denktaş, leader of the self-styled 'Turkish Republic of North Cyprus' won support for his proposed constitution for North Cyprus in a referendum on 6th May. A full report on the current situation in Cyprus and the implications of this move will appear in the July Cyprus Special issue of *Turkey Newsletter*.

FERTILIZER

Turkey has signed an agreement to build a fertilizer factory in Mersin costing \$230 million. Tunisia and Kuwait are to supply raw materials. Capital for the factory is to consist of 60% from Tunisia, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and 40% from Turkey.

The deal is part of a major offensive by Turkey aimed at penetrating Middle East markets and offset the tendency of Turkish trade to stagnate in its main Middle East markets — Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Libya.

Despite setbacks, the Arab world continues to be a main area in which Turkish capital can break out of the continuing economic crisis in Turkey and expand. As the *Middle East Magazine* pointed out in its May issue... "Turkish success in the Middle East has been in the field of contracting. Since their first venture into Libya in 1975, Turkish contractors have become increasingly sophisticated.

"Apart from housing and road-building projects, they are now also able to undertake the building of water supply and desalination plants and a whole range of technologically complex tasks... There are now over 200 Turkish companies and well over 200,000 Turkish workers active in the Middle East."

**TURKEY
NEWSLETTER**



129 Newington Green Road,
London N1, England