

TURKEY NEWSLETTER



Publication of the Committee for Defence
of Democratic Rights in Turkey

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TURKEY & BULGARIA

BULGARIA AND THE TURKS - TURKEY AND THE KURDS

Since May 6th over 120,000 members of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria have crossed the border into Turkey. An initial 2,000 are believed to have been actually expelled by Bulgaria, the rest have come "voluntarily".

The Turkish regime has raised the treatment of the Turkish minority in various forums partly in an effort to acquire a better image internationally.

THE BULGARIAN POSITION

The Bulgarian government position starts from the premise that there is in fact no Turkish minority in Bulgaria. Instead they say that there are only "Bulgarian Moslems". These are Bulgarians whose ancestors were forcibly converted to Islam in 14th-19th centuries after the conquest of Bulgaria by the Ottoman Empire. The authorities say that in recent years there is a "renaissance" of the Bulgarian nation and that is why, for instance, all "Bulgarian muslims" have voluntarily decided to change their names from Turkish ones to Bulgarian names.

The reasons given by the Bulgarian authorities for this exodus are that: Firstly, in line with international obligations all Bulgarian citizens are being given the unconditional right to travel abroad and stay if they wish or return. Secondly, There are elements who have been inspired by "outside forces" (ie Turkey) trying to panic the muslim minority into leaving the country. They also maintain some of these elements are trying to foster Islamic fundamentalism.

EXPLOITATION BY THE TURKISH REGIME

The sudden flood of refugees from Bulgaria has come as a godsend to the government of Turgut Ozal in Turkey. Suddenly the Turkish regime could project itself as a haven of humanity making huge sacrifices to protect an oppressed people. In the storm of publicity they hoped that abroad people would forget the continuing violations of human rights in Turkey, their oppression of the Kurdish nation and occupation of North Cyprus. At home, the regime tried to build up a wave of rabid nationalism and war hysteria to deflect attention from economic crisis, poverty, oppression and the ruling party's disastrous showing in the polls.

The attitude of the regime was clearly shown at the anti-Bulgarian mass rally organised by the government and official

opposition parties in Istanbul on 24th June. Over 100,000 people heard calls to "invade Bulgaria" and saw pictures reminding them of "Bulgarian atrocities" during the 1913 Balkan War.

The Turkish regime is in fact not opposed to the mass influx of the Bulgarian Turks. It is not interested in Bulgaria recognising the existence of the Bulgarian Turkish minority and treating them as truly equal citizens, instead all the Turkish regime demands is an agreement to allow for orderly emigration to Turkey.

The Turkish regime wants to use the refugees from Bulgaria to bolster its own political fortunes. It hopes they will be so grateful to the regime for "saving" them that they will be loyal supporters of the government, prepared to do dirty work for them.

Already, the regime has announced that Turkish Bulgarians are to be settled in villages in the East of Turkey (Kurdistan) including villages abandoned by both Kurdish and Alevi villagers who have had to flee to Britain to escape oppression by the Turkish regime. This oppression consists of national (Kurds) and religious (Alevi) oppression - precisely what the regime accuses Bulgaria of practising!

WORKERS SACKED TO MAKE WAY FOR REFUGEES

Turk-Is (Turkish Trade Union Confederation) reports that over 1,000 Turkish workers, mainly in the textile industry, have been sacked by employers and replaced with Bulgarian Turks.

Turkish trade unions say that the employers see potential of the refugees as a skilled, "grateful" workforce who are reluctant to join trade unions and are desperate enough to work for less than even the miniscule going rate for the job.

Agricultural Workers Union chair, Yilmaz Senturk, commented "Turkish officials complain of Bulgarian inhuman practices, but they do the same to Turkish workers. Our workers' democratic rights are being raped".

CDDRT'S VIEW

As an organisation concerned with human rights and events affecting Turkey, the position of the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights is clear. In Bulgaria there are approximately 1.5 million Bulgarian Turks, plus about 150,000 *Pomaks* (people whose

ancestors were Bulgarian converts to Islam). The Bulgarian Turks are a national minority. The fact that they were Turkish was recognised in Bulgaria for many years. Since shortly after regaining its independence in the 19th century Bulgaria has had treaties with Turkey governing the exchange of populations - which recognised the existence of a Turkish minority some of whom would be expected to regard Turkey as a homeland. The Bulgarian Communist Party, including Todor Zhivkov, recognised this fact up until at least the 1970s. In fact in a speech in 1964 President Zhivkov had actually called for more Turkish language schools and other facilities for Bulgarian Turkish citizens, until the mid 1970s there were Turkish language schools, newspapers and party organisations. In addition, those Turks who were religious could attend mosques etc., without hindrance.

The change of attitude of the Bulgarian authorities towards the Bulgarian Turks seems to have more to do with nationalism than socialism.

The claim that the entire Turkish-speaking population of Bulgaria suddenly in the mid 1980s spontaneously decided to change their first and family names from Turkish ones to completely different Bulgarian ones stretches credibility.

To claim that the Turks are just "muslim Bulgarians" is incorrect on two grounds. Firstly, there is no historical basis for the claim that their ancestors were all Slavs forcibly converted. The fact is, the Ottoman Empire usually preferred its non-muslim subjects to remain non-muslim because they could extract more taxes and other tribute from them. In dealing with populations which resisted the Ottoman Empire, the preferred method was mass deportations of the populations to other parts of the Empire and/or settlement of Turcoman tribes from Anatolia in the conquered regions. The present minority in Bulgaria is characterised by use of the Turkish language and customs. Outside of Bulgaria, the presence of an historically based Turkish minority in that country is an accepted fact among experts in both history and anthropology.

On the question of religion, to characterise the Bulgarian Turks as a "muslim minority" is in fact to strengthen the hold of religion over that section of the population, giving the most

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reactionary elements the position of protectors of the minority which is surely not the business of socialists. Also disturbing is the impression given by Bulgaria that while the Islamic religion is tolerated it is the Christian Orthodox faith that is truly "national". This surely violates the principals of secularism which socialists are supposed to hold so dear.

It cannot be denied that over 130,000 people do not flee their homes, jobs and a good standard of living just because of a bit of propaganda by agents of foreign powers.

If the aim of the Bulgarian authorities was to create a more cohesive state with all people feeling equal loyalty to the country and social system, then mass

name changing and denial of historical facts is not the way to go about it. On the contrary the mistakes of the Bulgarian authorities have played into the hands of the Turkish regime and those elements dreaming of a "greater" Turkey.

HYPOCRISY

The CDDRT maintains that the Turkish regime has no right to try and adopt the high moral ground in relation to the Turkish refugees. It own record disqualifies it. Turkish politicians pontificate about the Bulgarians' denial of the existence of a Turkish minority and the ban on the Turkish language. The regime denounces religious discrimination and the arrest of Turkish activists in Bulgaria. Yet the Turkish regime indulges in

precisely the same practices but on a bigger and more brutal scale against the 10 million Kurdish people in the Turkish occupied part of Kurdistan.

The Turkish regime parades its humanity about the refugees from Bulgaria while virtually imprisoning and denying refugee status to over 36,000 Iraqi Kurdish refugees in East Turkey.

The Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey condemns the current treatment of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. At the same time, it believes that the Turkish regime with its criminal record has no right to point the finger at Bulgaria and attempts by the Turkish regime to use this tragic situation for its own purposes should be rejected.

KURDISTAN

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT!

The June 18th issue of the popular Turkish weekly news magazine *2000e Dogru* (Towards 2000) was banned on the orders of a Turkish State Security Court. Its crime this time was to dare to point out the similarities between the treatment of Turks in Bulgaria with that of Kurds in Turkey.

While the Turkish regime hypocritically protested at the forced assimilation of Bulgarian Turks including the suppression of their language and imprisonment for dissenting, the Turkish regime persecutes 10 million Kurds precisely along the same lines. A spokesman for the magazine, reported in the *Times*, said: "We believe that before criticising the back yards of others, we should first clear the dirt from our own."

The Turkish television has been screening a sensationalist series about life for Turks in Bulgaria called *Belene* after an island prison camp where many Turks have been sent. *2000e Dogru* replied by interviewing Kurdish former political prisoners who said scenes in *Belene* reminded them of their own experiences in the notorious Turkish Diyarbakir Prison.

The red carpet treatment of the refugees from Bulgaria in Turkey was also contrasted with the treatment of 36,000 Iraqi Kurdish refugees in Turkey, who have not been granted refugee status and are virtually imprisoned in camps in the East of the country.

The Turkish regime is furious at *2000e Dogru* for spoiling its attempt to

exploit the situation of Bulgarian Turks in order to give itself a humane image in the eyes of the world. The magazine, already facing 13 prosecutions by the authorities expects that some editorial staff may have to stand trial.



MRS MITTERAND AND THE KURDS

The wife of the President of France Danielle Mitterand, visited refugee camps for Iraqi Kurds in Turkey at the beginning of May. Mrs Mitterand not only met refugees from Iraq but she also had meetings with Ismail Besikci, an academic who spent 12 years in Turkish prisons for writing about the Kurdish people and the wife of Mehdi Zana, former mayor of Diyarbakir who has been sentenced to a total of 40 years

imprisonment for speaking Kurdish and championing Kurdish rights.

Mrs Mitterand's genuine support of the Kurdish people, her forthright criticism of the treatment of the refugees by the Turkish authorities and her refusal to become part of the Turkish regime's propaganda circus led to vicious attacks on her in the Turkish media.

Following her visit the regime has restricted access to the refugee camps. Foreigners now have to get permission in Ankara to visit them.

DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN KURDISTAN

An International Conference on Human Rights in Kurdistan was held from 14th to 16th April 1989 at the Polytechnic of Bremen, West Germany under the auspices of the President of the Bremen State Parliament, Dr. Dieter Kink. Parliamentarians, academics, journalists and creative artists from 16 countries participated. The Conference condemned the Turkish regime's policy towards the Kurdish people and published a declaration on the rights of the people of Kurdistan.

The text of the Bremen Declaration will be published in the next issue of *Turkey Newsletter* as part of a special feature on Kurdistan.

KURDISTAN

The next issue of *Turkey Newsletter* will carry a special feature on the situation of the Kurdish people in Turkey.

NEWS IN BRIEF

FUNDAMENTALISTS AGAINST ART

Islamic fundamentalists in Turkey, supported by fascist elements in the state, are attempting to attack artistic freedom.

In March, students from the Theological Faculty of Ankara University attacked an art exhibition sponsored by a textile firm. They objected to paintings and mixed-media works by several well-known Turkish artists. A work by Ergin Inan depicting two nude figures surrounded by arabic language papers containing quotations of the Prophet Mohammed was a particular target. Several works were damaged.

Despite protests by other students in defence of the exhibition, several "offending" works were removed by the exhibition's organisers.

Prominent artist Bedri Baykam, commented that no one should yield to religious pressure in a secular state.

He went on to comment: "Besides, there was nothing insulting in the painting. Are believers in the Islamic religion born with their clothes on so that they think nudity shameful?... The most dangerous people in this country aren't the fundamentalists but left-wing intellectuals who compromise with fundamentalists in the name of democracy".

FUNDAMENTALISTS ATTACK JOURNALISTS



On May 5th, Islamic fundamentalists blocked streets for hours outside the newly opened Cezeri Kazim Pasa Mosque in Istanbul's newspaper district.

Islamic thugs claimed they were marking "Jerusalem Day" and calling on all Muslims to "help take back Jerusalem from the Israelis". They then started to beat up journalists. After this, the fundamentalists marched on the offices of one of Turkey's leading newspapers *Hurriyet* shouting "down with Zionism" and "the police are with us". Protesting

at the alleged "pro-Zionist" views of the newspaper, they attacked and injured more journalists and press photographers while police stood by refusing to intervene.

Following the incidents journalists in Istanbul, Ankara and Adana staged protest actions against the collusion of the authorities with the religious fanatics.

CYPRUS

As UN-sponsored talks drag on between the administrations of the Greek and Turkish parts of Cyprus with no sign of ending, yet more incidents show the colonial nature of the occupation of North Cyprus by the Turkish army.

The Turkish Cypriot population consists of about 100,000 people occupying 40% of the island. In addition, there are now between 28,000 and 35,000 Turkish troops and some 65,000 Turkish settlers from the mainland. This is causing resentment among many Turkish Cypriots who believe they are being swamped by people with a vested interest in not seeing a reunited, independent Cyprus.

When the leader of the main opposition party in North Cyprus, Ozgur Ozgur of the Republican Turkish Party, voiced the concern of native Turkish Cypriots, he was promptly "punished". The mainland Turkish government accusing him of "libelling the motherland", confiscated his Turkish passport. As Britain is the only country to recognise the Turkish Cypriot administration's passport, this means that Ozgur cannot travel abroad, except to the UK.

The regime was further enraged by Ozgur's comparison of the treatment of Bulgarian Turks with that of Turkish Cypriots.

In a recent visit to Britain, Ozgur affirmed his party's commitment to a federal solution to the Cyprus problem and called on the British government (as one of the guarantors of Cyprus) to do more to support UN initiatives for a

federal solution.

WOMEN'S CONGRESS

The first Kurultay or general congress of women in Turkey to discuss women's issues was held in Istanbul on May 19th.

Lively and stormy debates took place largely between feminist groups and those described as socialist women's groups over whether it was sufficient for women to fight for socialism in order to gain their rights or whether an independent women's movement was the way forward.

Purely feminist women's groups were in a minority at the Congress and walked out when a man was allowed to speak.

However the three-day congress covered a wide range of topics including the issues of single parent families, the role and conditions of working class women, social norms which prevent women developing their personalities, women at work and legislative restrictions on women's rights.

A comprehensive manifesto listing many demands for more rights for women was adopted at the end of the congress. Participants felt the Congress had been useful and opened the way for a major debate on the place of women in Turkish society. Despite violent disagreements, the congress has, for the first time, opened dialogue between all the trends in the women's movement and this was set to continue.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTION

In May an international armaments fair called "IDEA-89" was held in Ankara.

Among the 30 countries participating was South Africa. This highlighted the continued high level of covert and overt trading between the racist regime and Turkey.

A South African state-owned company is bidding for a Turkish contract to modernize 155mm howitzers.



Students hold illegal street meeting to protest at the death of Mahemet Dalci on May Day.

STEEL STRIKE ENTERS THIRD MONTH



Over 20,000 workers employed in the state owned Iskenderun - Karabuk Iron and steel complex have been on strike since 4th May.

The workers, members of the Steel union Celik-Is are demanding a living wage.

The strike began over two months late owing to a ban imposed on the strike by the government to prevent it taking place during the politically sensitive local election period.

The strike has received massive local support with shop keepers giving the workers free food and families organising support groups.

The workers who are confronting the notorious metal industries employers' association MESS (which Prime Minister Ozal led in the 1970s) is appealing for international solidarity. They particularly want action to end steel imports into Turkey during the strike.

NO REAL SOLUTION

The massive protest actions by public sector workers in April (see TN No.87) for pay rises ended following a summit meeting between the trade unions involved and the government on May 17. The regime frightened by the prospects of an all-out public sector strike in late May, offered a 142% pay rise plus certain social benefits. This was accepted despite protests from the members of many unions who were demanding over 200% to take into account inflation.

The widespread feeling is that the present settlement will only delay another showdown between the public sector workers and the regime until late 1989.

A SCHWEPPE'S ATTACK ON TURKISH WORKERS

Cukurova Gida A.S., is the company which produces soft drinks under the Schweppes name in Turkey. For three

months workers at the company's soft drinks plant have been on strike for a living wage.

In an effort to break the strike, Cukurova Gida announced in June that they had put the factory up for sale because "Schweppes market share (of soft drinks in Turkey) has been eroded by the strike".

ILO ACCUSES TURKEY OF VIOLATIONS

During a meeting of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) general assembly, President of Turk-Is (Turkish trade union confederation) Sevket Yilmaz accused the Turkish government of "paying lip service to the principals of the ILO abroad but violating them in practice at home".

The ILO Application Committee found that Turkish law No. 1402 conflicts with ILO regulations safeguarding the union rights of workers facing dismissal or transfer. The Committee therefore recommended that Turkey be placed on the ILO blacklist - one of the most serious steps the ILO can take against countries which persistently violate workers' minimum rights.



Members of the independent rubber and chemical workers' union, Laspetkim-Is celebrate victory after a one month strike at the Deva Holding Medicine factory.

DIVORCE ACTION

In May, road construction workers protesting at low pay found a highly unusual way of expressing their views. About 1,500 members of Yol-Is (Road and Construction Workers Union) marched to a local law court to file petitions for divorce. Filling the streets and causing a nervous breakdown in the legal system, each worker handed in an identical petition stating that the wages they were being paid were insufficient to support a family and so family life had become impossible.

NURSES AND DOCTORS FIGHT BANS

At the end of June, the governors of Ankara and Istanbul have banned demonstrations by nurses, pharmacists and doctors over low pay and bad working conditions. The reason given was such actions "are harmful to national security and the basic principals of the Republic".

Nurses and doctors, banned from striking, have been staging night time vigils at state hospitals and spending 20 minutes examining each patient as part of their protest.

On 18th June, to protest the ban on their demonstrations, Menekse Meral, leader of the Istanbul Branch of the Hospital Nurses Association accompanied by five other nurses left black nurses caps in front of the Istanbul governor's office.

They were promptly detained by police. They, and doctors taking part in the night time vigils are being threatened with trial before State Security Courts for their acts of "subversion".

NEW MAGAZINE



The Workers Health Association, (ISD) which is continuing to gather strength in Istanbul has started to produce a publication called *Isçi Yasami* (Workers' Life). This not only provides excellent information on health problems, hazardous working conditions, legal advice and information about the economy, but also features working class, history, art and poetry.

The ISD is made up of active trade unionists, doctors and other specialists dedicated to raising the issues of health and safety in industry and also giving practical help to workers and trade unions on health and safety questions.

1989 MAY DAY

Workers in Turkey celebrated May Day 1989 in the midst of bloodshed, repression and arrests.

The celebration of May Day as the international festival of workers has been suppressed in Turkey since before the 1980 coup. In the 1970s, despite bans and fascist terrorism, May Day was celebrated on a massive scale. It became a traditional display of the respective strengths of the workers and democratic forces on one side and the forces of reaction on the other.

As in previous years, the regime banned the celebration of May Day. The "democratic" Prime Minister, Ozal, went as far as saying "we will never allow May Day to be celebrated as a Labour Day". Attempts by committees of trade unionists and others to get permission for legal May Day marches were rejected.

In the weeks before May Day, security forces launched big raids into working class areas of Istanbul and the other major cities. Trade union activists were harassed or detained; hundreds of people suspected of links with revolutionary groups were arrested. The aim was to detain or drive underground any people likely to be involved in organising May Day actions.

The Istanbul May Day Committee made up of the leaderships of several trade unions including the powerful Petrol-Is (Petro-chemical workers' union) stated that they would hold a march whatever the government said and whether the opposition Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) supported them or not. They called on workers to join a rally in Istanbul's Hurriyet Square while left wing organisations declared their intention to march from there to Taksim Square, scene of the massive 1970s May Days and known amongst workers as May Day Square.

The Ozal regime deliberately began to prepare for a bloodbath. On the eve of May Day, security units began to set up road blocks around Istanbul and Ankara to prevent workers bussing in from other areas for the marches. 18,000 police backed by armoured cars and army commando units were moved into the area around Taksim Square.

On the morning of May Day police visited the Trade Union May Day Committee and warned them that if they went ahead with the march there was a secret organisation within the police force that intended to open fire on the rally. On receiving this warning, at the last minute the committee cancelled the planned rally. This act left thousands of workers already on their way to assembly points in the lurch.

Several thousand workers and students, cheered on by by-standers and walking from different directions towards Hurriyet Square or Taksim were savagely attacked by riot police. The crowd shouted May Day slogans in Turkish and Kurdish. The police used their wooden truncheons indiscriminately and fired their guns directly into the crowds. People scattered under fire then regrouped in side streets to continue their action.

In Sisli district, workers and youths enraged by

the police actions stoned riot police and destroyed police vehicles.

Police hunted demonstrators through the streets dragging people out of taxis and busses and beating them.

At the end of the day, one 18 year old factory worker, Mehmet Dalci was dying of head wounds after being shot in the head by police at close range and 30 people were seriously wounded. Over 1,000 people had been arrested both in Istanbul and other cities where attempts to hold May Day actions were brutally dispersed.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

Several eyewitness accounts of events have reached the CDDRT office:

Ali a worker who witnessed police brutality in Istikal Street said: "The police brought the demonstrators into the police station through a line of police. They had to run the gauntlet where each policeman was mercilessly beating the protestors. Several were beaten unconscious and fell senseless on the ground. They were then dragged into the station. One policeman boasted of how he had broken 3 truncheons; they were hitting protestors on the head, not the arms or shoulders."

Many stories are told of the support shown by by-standers for the protestors.

Bulent, a protestor who had been hit on the head, told of how the workers in the local Turkish Bath opened their doors to about 15 demonstrators and shut the doors on the pursuing police.

Many shopkeepers hid demonstrators in their shops. Office workers in Istiklal Street protested at police brutality against young protestors shouting "Don't hit them, you'll kill them, they're our children."

Another protestor told of how she staggered into a boutique with her clothes in tatters and had been given new clothes to wear until the police had passed.

While the state controlled Turkish radio and television only briefly reported the day's events and did not mention the police use of guns, the Turkish newspapers carried full and reasonably fair reports. As a result bad feeling developed between police and journalists which surfaced on May 4th during the funeral of the murdered worker, Mehmet Dalci.

The government went on record to fully support the police actions. Inonu, leader of the main opposition party, the Social Democrats (SHP), while criticising the police action said they should have used modern riot equipment such as tear gas instead of guns!

ATTACK ON THE PRESS AND THE FUNERAL OF A MURDERED WORKER

Over 4,000 angry workers and youths gathered outside a mosque for the funeral of Mehmet. Police meanwhile terrorised the parents of Mehmet Dalci into letting them steal his body via a backdoor and taking it to a cemetery for a hasty burial.

The police meanwhile launched an attack on the

crowd. The workers defended themselves with sticks and stones and the police were forced to retreat and regroup. As the crowd shouted "Police murderers", "Down with fascism" and "Our Mehmetts never die our class cannot be defeated". Police replied with their own slogans of "Death to communists", "Hit the traitors". They then launched a fresh attack whose first target was the group of journalists covering the events. Most commentators agree that the police decided to revenge themselves on the press for the coverage of the May Day events. Police savagely beat the journalists shouting "f... the Journalists", "clobber them to death" etc. Several journalists were severely injured. *Milliyet* journalist Sedat Aral had his ear torn off, others suffered broken arms and concussion.

The police fired tear gas at the crowd and beat women and children indiscriminately. They also attacked people taking the injured to hospital.

The crowds were finally dispersed but 400 managed to make their way to the cemetery where Mehmet Dalci was buried and take a revolutionary oath over his grave to continue the struggle.

TORTURE

The Istanbul branch of the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD) has produced evidence that at least 18 of the protestors detained after May Day were tortured and ill-treated. One of them, Selim Aksu, a student at Istanbul University said: "Both my arms were broken during scuffles on May Day. I was taken from my hospital bed a day after the incidents. They took me to Beyoglu Police station. My head was bleeding, both my arms were broken and I had a wound in my left leg. They beat me up like the other detainees. I fainted."

About 56 of those detained are still being held in custody on the orders of the State Security Court.

The May Day events have once again exposed the true nature of the regime in Turkey. But bloodshed and repression will not deter the peoples of Turkey from their struggle for real democracy.



May Day 1989.



May Day protestors defend themselves



Police arrest demonstrators.



TORTURE, TRIALS & PRISONS

MASS GRAVES

The authorities in Turkey are continuing to hush up the horror of "Butchers' River". This refers to the rubbish tip outside Sirtak where up the bodies of up to 300 Kurds killed by the security forces are believed to be buried.

A former army sergeant, A. Baki Mukyan claims that he was involved in torturing and in some cases "executing" Kurdish people suspected of helping guerrillas and that those who died under interrogation were dumped in bulldozed pits.

A Kurdish member of the Turkish parliament, Kemal Birlik says he was detained and tortured by the military back in 1984 in the same area and knows of many mass graves of those who did not survive interrogation in the area.

Local authorities ordered a limited excavation of a few metres which uncovered three bodies but then the state prosecutor ordered excavations to cease in order to prevent further grisly revelations.

TORTURED



36 year old Akif Ozdemir is dragged from a court after trying to remove his clothes to show evidence of torture.

Akif Ozdemir is on trial in Bursa accused of making pro-Kurdish propaganda. He said that while in detention he was beaten all over his body with wooden truncheons and his ribs were broken in an effort to make him "confess". (Photo from Milliyet, 16th June 1989).

SCHOOL GIRL ON TRIAL

17 year old high school student, Safinaz Ilboga is standing trial before a State Security Court in the city of Konya charged with making "separatist (ie;

Kurdish) propaganda". She faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

"Justice" is such in Turkey, that even though the State Prosecutor in the case submitted a request to the court that she be released on the grounds that Safinaz was suffering from psychological problems and had already been expelled from her school for "separatism", the court still refused to release her.

STOP PRESS DEATH SENTENCES IN DEV YOL TRIAL

Draconian sentences were announced at the end of the Ankara Dev Yol (Revolutionary Path) mass trial on 19th July.

After a mass trial lasting seven years, 7 defendants were sentenced to death, 39 to life and over 300 more to sentences of up to 21 years in prison.

During this mass trial of 723 people, 6 defendants died under torture. All the defendants have given evidence that they were tortured for long periods at DAL, the notorious torture centre in Ankara. The accusations against the defendants which ranged from just reading Dev Yol's newspaper to political assassination in the period before the 1980 coup, were based on statements extracted under torture.

The Dev Yol trial was a travesty of justice with the military judges shouting down defendants during their submissions and refusing to listen to evidence concerning the torture of the defendants.

As the sentences were read out the defendants, who include several permanently maimed during interrogation, shouted slogans against fascism.

The defendants announced their intention to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.

If you wish to participate in protests over this shameful verdict, please contact the CDDRT office for further information.

SENTENCED

On the 11th May in Kayseri, the local chair of the Socialist Party (SP) and 5 party committee members were sentenced to 4 years and 2 months jail each for sending a message of support for the rights of Kurdish people to a party event.

Two days later a State Security court in Ankara sentenced four people to 5 years imprisonment each for distributing a leaflet of the banned Communist Party of Turkey (Union) (TKP/B) in Samsun.

On the 26th May a Martial Law Court

in Adana completed two trials one against members of the Communist Labour Party of Turkey (TKEP) and the other against Dev Yol (Revolutionary Path) members. One defendant was sentenced to death, 3 to life imprisonment and 5 others to a range of sentences up to 15 years in prison.

PUBLISHERS ON TRIAL

On May 26th, the trial opened in Istanbul of 36 publishers accused of publishing a Turkish translation of Henry Miller's book *Tropic of Capricorn*. The book was originally published in Turkey in 1985, but was confiscated as "obscene" and its publisher convicted.

In 1988 a group of 36 publishers republished the book, omitting the paragraphs the court had ruled were obscene. However as an introduction to the book, the publishers had printed the original court verdict which contains word for word all "obscene" passages!

The trial is a new and major attack on freedom of expression in Turkey which, if successful, will be used to launch another onslaught on writers in Turkey.

Anyone concerned with freedom of expression should write messages in support of the 36 publishers and send them to:

Mustafa Demirkanli
co Cumhuriyet
Turkocagi Caddesi 39
Cagaloglu - ISTANBUL
Turkey



A singer with the musical group YORUM, after her release tells of torture at the hands of the police

REVIEWS

PAYING THE PRICE

Under laws supposedly to restrict publications "harmful to minors", the government has officially banned 2,000 books and journals, including works by Moliere, Voltaire, Camus and Albert Einstein.

The report deals with the position of the Press, radio and television, cinema and literature in Turkey. Based on a wide range of reputable sources and interviews with many victims of censorship or repression, **Paying the Price** builds up a picture of freedom of expression still under siege in Turkey.

The report also exposes the harassment of many public organisations such as the relatives of political prisoners organisation, TAYAD and medical associations.

The report includes a series of recommendations which if implemented would help give freedom of expression some real meaning in Turkey today.

Paying the Price is available from Human Rights Watch, 36 West 44th Street, Rm.911, New York, NY 10036. USA. Price: \$12.00

... "You have freedom to write, but only if you're willing to pay the price for it". These apt words by the editor of *2000'e dogru* (Towards 2000) are at the beginning of a new report by the U.S.-based Helsinki Watch human rights organisation entitled, **Paying the Price: Freedom of Expression in Turkey**.

The report is based on a fact-finding mission to Turkey by US Helsinki Watch members in late 1988 plus detailed information gleaned from many reputable sources. **Paying the Price** exposes the really high price being paid by journalists, film makers, writers and artists in Turkey today who dare to

produce anything the Turkish regime deems unacceptable.

This excellent publication is in fact a 136-page book plus useful appendices.

The authors, while pointing out that Turkey is a parliamentary democracy - with limitations - state: "Although the Turkish government in 1988 signed and ratified both the United Nations and European conventions to prevent torture, Turkish citizens continue to be tortured in the same police stations as before, using the same kinds of implements and methods of torture..."

The report points out that many more publications are being produced in Turkey today which are trying to expand the area of free speech, but many face confiscation or the arrest and trial of their editors and journalists. The report shows that: "in the five years since the end of military rule in 1983, 2,127 journalists have been tried in 1,426 cases."

TRADE UNIONS

The Brussels based European Trade Union Institute has just published a pamphlet, **The Trade Union Movement in Turkey**.

This gives a brief history of trade unionism in Turkey and gives a breakdown of the present situation.

The pamphlet is particularly useful in its description of the structure of trade unions in Turkey today and the legal constraints on trade unionism.

As far as we know, this pamphlet is the only recent such publication on the subject of Turkish trade unionism and while limited by its size is a useful introduction to the subject.

The Trade Union Movement in Turkey is available from the ETUI,

Boulevard de l'Imperatrice 66 (Bte 4) 1000 Brussels, Belgium.

THE KURDISH QUESTION

The Minority Rights Group have recently published an updated edition of their award winning report on the Kurds.

Written by David McDowell, this report gives a comprehensive view of the position of the Kurdish people in each of the states occupying Kurdistan - Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria plus the communities in the USSR.

The Report brings the story of the Kurds up to the campaign of genocide being waged by the Iraqi dictatorship against the Kurds.

The section on the part of Kurdistan occupied by the Turkish regime has been greatly updated and includes information on the guerilla struggle in the area.

The Kurds is to be recommended as one of the best introductions to this vital subject available in English.

The Kurds is available from bookshops or The Minority Rights Group, 29 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NT. Price £1.80 (plus 20% postage).

INDICTMENT

Turkey Today: Shadow of the Junta is the title of an excellent report produced by the Australian Committee for Human Rights and Democracy in Turkey.

The well illustrated brochure is based on the findings of an Australian delegation which visited Turkey last year.

The report is available from the CDDRT in London at £3.50 (including postage), or direct from the CHRDT, PO Box 137, Broadmedows, Vic. 3047, Australia. Price:\$5.00.

TURKEY NEWSLETTER APPEAL

The CDDRT apologises for the delay and different format of this issue of *Turkey Newsletter*. This is due to financial difficulties and the fact that our usual printer has ceased to trade. We hope to have things back to normal by Issue No.89.

For over 9 years, the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey has produced *Turkey Newsletter* as a high standard publication striving to both "educate and agitate" democratic public opinion on the questions of human rights and democracy in Turkey. To do this obviously requires money. Our loyal subscribers and CDDRT affiliates contribute to this, but to continue to produce high quality material on the situation in Turkey donations are essential.

We therefore appeal to you, if you have not already subscribed to *Turkey Newsletter* or affiliate to CDDRT to do so. Alternatively we would ask you to make a donation

to CDDRT. A donation to our work is a donation to the struggle for democracy in Turkey.

All donations are gratefully acknowledged.

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3 000 REFUGEES FLEE T BRITAIN

May and June saw a dramatic upsurge in the number of refugees fleeing from Turkey to Britain. According to latest figures some 3500 mainly Alevite or Kurdish people arrived in Britain asking for political asylum in the two month period.

The sudden increase in people fleeing the country is believed to be related to a general increase of repression - particularly in the Tunceli and Maras areas of Turkey.

For years many of the refugees had been subjected to constant harassment, imprisonments and, in most cases, torture.

Those from Kurdish villages and towns told of random raids by the security forces and beatings and imprisonment merely on vague suspicion of being sympathetic to Kurdish nationalism.

In reprisal for the growth of the Kurdish national liberation struggle, the regime is trying to cower the population or depopulate vast areas in Turkish Kurdistan.

Despite claims by the regime, Kurdish refugees all had convincing stories to tell being victimised on the basis of their nationality.

People from an Alevi (a non-orthodox religious sect) background also had horrific stories of maltreatment to tell. Many of the Alevi refugees witnessed or lost relations in the Corum and Kahramanmaras massacres in 1979. In these events fascist gunmen and Sunni Muslim fanatics slaughtered hundreds of Alevi origin men, women and children.



The Union of Turkish Workers, including many refugees, held a protest march through Westminster on 18th June to show support for political refugees from Turkey.

CONSTITUTION OF THE CDDRT

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

2. The aims of CDDRT are as follows:
And all vestiges of military rule, martial law, torture and executions.

Release all political prisoners
Freedom for all democratic organisations.
End the national oppression of the Kurds and national minorities. Defend the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination.

Stop expansionism, end the occupation of Cyprus.

Withdraw Turkey from NATO and close all NATO bases.

No military, political or economic support for the anti-democratic regime.

Totally oppose the regime's 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 1st January each year.

4. Congress is the highest body of the CDDRT and shall meet every year. 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-opt.

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 today work of the 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.

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Turkish Student Federation in the UK

Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain

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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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REFUGEES

Today, they are being victimised by state-backed Sunni fundamentalists who are trying to erase the Alevi community because of its traditional support for democratic struggles and its opposition to religious fundamentalism.

Many of the refugees carry the horrific marks of torture on their bodies.

Unfortunately their reception by the British authorities has been generally unsympathetic. Most of the refugees after an initial grilling by the immigration authorities were sent to the London boroughs of Hackney and Islington. Here, with scant resources, Turkish, Kurdish and Church community organisations had to battle to find food and shelter for thousands of bewildered refugees as well as deal with their legal problems and prepare their cases for asylum.

Despite the sudden influx of such a large number of refugees - who included a substantial group of women and children - Turkish and Kurdish community organisations managed to find housing and meet the basic needs of the refugees. A feat that even Home Office Minister Timothy Renton paid tribute to in answer to questions in the House of Commons.

However, several hundred of the refugees suffered a more unpleasant fate, they were put into detention centres and ordinary prisons. Given that many of them had experienced the horrors of life as political prisoners in Turkey, this was a particularly inappropriate and insensitive way to treat them. The authorities claimed that there was nowhere in the community to look after these refugees while their asylum applications (a process which can take a year) were studied. This claim was promptly rebutted by the Union of Turkish Workers community centre which offered to feed and house all those imprisoned. (In fact the UTW at the time of going to press has housed approximately 800 refugees in proper accommodation). The real reason for the putting them in prison was believed to be to pressure them into returning to Turkey.

In addition to this, there were widespread reports that immigration officers in the UK were boarding planes from Turkey at Heathrow and Gatwick, carrying out identity checks, and holding on board any who were claiming asylum until the plane took off back to Turkey.

The imprisoned refugees began a series of hunger strikes demanding that they be released into the care of the Turkish and Kurdish community in London while their cases were studied. The Union of Turkish workers organised a series of pickets and demonstrations to back these demands.

At the time of going to print approximately 200 refugees are still being held in detention.

SENT BACK TO FACE BEATING

The *Observer* of 25th June carried a report that a refugee described as Hasan who had been repeatedly tortured in Turkey as a suspected member of a left wing organisation, and who as a 10 year old had watched mobs burn his family's house during the Kahramanmaras massacre, was sent back to Turkey by immigration officials in the UK who refused even to study his documents.

On returning to Turkey, Hasan was detained by police who accused him of being a traitor who beat and kicked him and held him for 13 hours.

PROOF

Vera Brittain writing in the *Guardian* on June 9th reported:

"A hospital worker for 24 years, a farmer, a student, an

accountant and a city driver had one thing in common in their native Turkey - they are Kurds.

Today in London they are homesick for wives and families left behind, and for Turkey's sun and mountains, but for the first time in their lives are openly speaking Kurdish without the fear of arrest and torture which has been their common life experience.

The five men, all from the Muslim sect known as *alevis* from the Maras area of Turkey, are among 50 newly arrived refugees undergoing treatment at London's Medical Foundation for the care of victims of torture while they hope for asylum in Britain.

Dr Tom Landau and Dr Gill Hinshelwood have examined the 50 refugees and found that all but one (a woman who had been too frightened to even step out of her home) have suffered severe and prolonged torture, severe beatings and detention or imprisonment.

"They have been ill-treated unspeakably. As a routine which they barely even mention, almost all have suffered *falaka*, which is the beating of the soles until the feet are raw and swollen to twice their normal size. The men are then made to walk through salt water with guards sitting on their shoulders," the two doctors reported.

Classical clinical findings have confirmed for the doctors the Kurds' stories of patterns of torture which include being suspended by the wrists or ankles for long periods, tied to tables in a primitive kind of rack, given electric shocks on the toes, fingers and penis, and being imprisoned blindfolded and in tiny prison cells for long periods..."

CAMPAIGN

A campaign is now underway to persuade the British government to grant the refugees asylum in the UK.

We would appeal to all our readers to support this campaign by among other things, writing letters to your MP. If you wish to be more actively involved in such work, or just require information, please contact the CDDRT office

VISA

In an effort to stop the inflow of refugees from Turkey, the British government has imposed visa requirements on travellers from that country. This seems to be in line with a sinister tendency among EEC member countries as they approach 1990 to close their borders to "non-European" refugees.

The Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey condemns this move as one aimed primarily at depriving people facing persecution and torture of a one means of escape and a violation of the old British tradition of being a place of sanctuary for those fleeing political persecution.

THANKS

The Union of Turkish Workers would like to thank all those individuals and organisations who have contributed food, clothes, bedding and money to support the recently arrived refugees. In particular we would like to thank the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance and Cambridge and District Trades Council.

TORTURE, TRIALS & PRISONS

CHILD TORTURED



The regime still claims it is improving human rights yet even children are still being tortured on suspicion of even "ordinary" crimes.

The picture shows 14-year old Tahsin Capulcu. Arrested on suspicion of theft, Tahsin was first subjected to falaka (beating on the soles of the feet). Later his interrogators poured boiling tea on his head and boiling water over his body. Traces of the torture were still visible when Social Democratic MP, Kamer Genc presented him to a press conference on May 17.

ATTACK ON WOMEN

A bus carrying leading members of DEMKAD (Democratic Women's Association) was stopped by police on the road from Istanbul to Ankara. The women were travelling to Ankara to attend a conference on torture organised by TAYAD (Association of Families of Prisoners and Detainees).

The police took the DEMKAD President Hatice Arikan and four other members into custody. They were all beaten and interrogated at police headquarters while other police raided the Association's offices.

RESISTANCE AT NAZILLI PRISON

Following attempts by the authorities to impose a harsh new regime on Nazilli Prison which included beatings and other ill-treatment 33 political prisoners began a hunger strike on April 27. When prison guards attempted to break the

prisoners' resistance and drive them into punishment cells the political prisoners put up barricades and a clash ensued. 18 guards were injured.

The authorities have since cut off all information between the prisoners and the outside world. Relatives of the prisoners are alarmed at this development.

RECEP MARASLI



Concern is being expressed for the health of Recep Marasli, a Kurdish political prisoner.

Recep Marasli was editor of the Komal publishing house and was sentenced to 36 years in prison at the time of the 1980 coup for making "seperatist propoganda". Until recently he was held at the notorious Diyarbakir Prison where he suffered torture and the after effects of an heroic hunger strike.

FAMILIES PROTEST



In June families of political prisoners protested outside Istanbul's Bayrampasa prison when the authorities announced an arbitrary limitation of visits to one hour on Fathers' Day. Traditionally in Turkey on special days and holidays families are allowed to visit prisoners in special areas without bars between them and for long periods.

This year, the authorities in order to collectively punish political prisoners for trying to escape have ended privileges.

Recip Marasli has been "adopted" by the Canadian PEN (International writers' organisation) club. They managed to see him once in prison under "controlled conditions" where he could not speak freely. They report that he has been transferred to the Eskisehir "E Type" prison far away from Kurdistan and that his health is in a serious condition.

ATTACK ON BAYRAMPASA

On May 15th Turkish security forces went on a rampage in Bayrampasa prison in Istanbul, beating political prisoners and attacking them with wooden clubs and even broken glass. The excuse used for the brutal attack was the discovery of yet another partially completed escape tunnel.

Over 50 prisoners were injured in the attack of whom 37 had to be taken to hospital. Info-Turk reports that even they, on being returned to the prison were put in solitary confinement. The punishment cells have no windows or light and are wet.

Prisoners' relatives gathering at the prison gates to find out what was happening were also brutally attacked by riot police.

In a further effort to break the resistance of political prisoners, 165 are reported to have been transferred to special prisons in Bursa and Canakkale.

THE ALEVI COMMUNITY UNDER ATTACK IN TURKEY

CDDRT BRIEFING
PAPER NO.5

The aim of CDDRT Briefing Papers is to give detailed information on a specific aspect of the struggle for democracy in Turkey, and to present the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey's point of view on such aspects.



Alevis dance the Sema

The influx of over 2500 refugees from Turkey into Britain in May and June 1989 has drawn attention to a little-known question outside of Turkey, that of the approximately 20 million people of Alevi background in that country. The Alevis are a religious/cultural minority, who, not for the first time in Turkish history, are facing discrimination in many walks of life.

Today in Turkey the same dark forces which spawned the 1980 fascist military coup are encouraging the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. These elements hope to encourage a synthesis between Sunni Islamic fundamentalism and Turkey's "traditional" fascist movement as a last resort barrier against the struggle of the peoples of Turkey for democracy and a better society.

In the history of popular uprisings and democratic struggles in Turkey, Alevis have played a leading role. Today the Alevi community, with its rejection of the authoritarian aspects of Islam and its tolerance constitutes a bulwark against attempts by elements inside and outside the present Turkish regime to impose Islamic fundamentalism on the country. For this reason the Turkish regime is pursuing

policies which deprive people of an Alevi background of basic civil rights, making them second class citizens.

Outside Turkey the Alevi question is almost unknown despite the fact that they form almost half the population of Turkey. The aim of this briefing paper is to begin to rectify this situation and raise public awareness of a new area of human rights abuse by the Turkish regime and one, which if unchecked, could have grave consequences for the democratic struggle in Turkey.

WHO ARE THE ALEVIS ?

To understand both the position of Alevis in Turkey today and why the regime wants to play the "Islamic card" one must look at history.

Aleviism as a system of beliefs and culture has its origins in the great migrations of Turkic tribes from central Asia to Anatolia in the 9th and 10th centuries.

In their Central Asian homelands the Turkish tribes' religious beliefs were based on Shamanism (nature worship). As they migrated they came into contact with Sufi mystics

who converted many to various forms of Islam. The majority adopted a very eclectic form of the religion. Most of these missionaries propagated variations on the Shia branch of Islam.

Shiaism originated among Muslims in early Islam who supported the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali. They represented trends which opposed the development of Islam into the ideology of a feudal ruling class (Sunniism). Shiaism became popular among the "second class citizens" and working people outside the heartlands of the Arab Empire. However, Shiaism itself tended to change in the various regions which adopted it as already existing local beliefs and philosophies permeated it. In the case of the Sufi missionaries in particular, their beliefs also contained a high proportion of elements from various religions including Indian Brahminism and Christian mysticism as well as Islam.

In the Middle Ages all political and social movements appeared in the ideological guise of religion. The Turkish tribes were no exception.

In the 11th century the Selcuk Turks, after establishing an Iran-based empire, penetrated Anatolia using armies composed of Turkmen tribes and slaves. After inflicting defeats on the Byzantine Empire, they established a state. This state was marked by a profound contradiction between a ruling class who had adopted the Sunni form of Islam with its heavy emphasis on authoritarianism and Sharia (religious penal code) and the mass of Turkmen tribes and villagers who clung to Shiite forms of Islam.

The forms of Shiaism adopted by the mass of tribespeople and peasants went through a gradual transformation in Anatolia, evolving their own ideas under the influence of beliefs and philosophies already existing in the region such as Christian mysticism and Greek philosophy. Soon there was little left of real Shiaism except support of the idea that the descendants of the family of Ali should lead Islam.

The Selcuk state collapsed under the impact of the Mongol invasions and popular uprisings by peasants, nomads and urban artisans in the 13th century. In this period Aleviism took on the forms by which it is recognised today.

In the years of chaos that followed, the ruling and merchant classes struggled to survive. As part of this struggle, they attempted to reach a compromise between the ruling ideology and the masses by trying to merge Sunniism with many Sufi mystical ideas. This produced Mevlevism, whose most prominent surviving feature are the famous "whirling Dervishes" so beloved of tourists in Turkey.

However late 13th century Anatolia was shaken by a series of popular uprisings known as Babai uprisings after their chief leader Ilyas Baba. These were huge rebellions by the Anatolian masses against feudal oppression and exploitation. The ideological banner of these was Aleviism. The rebels called for many things associated with most peasant rebellions including a rejection of the feudal hierarchy and abolition of private property. Thousands perished in the struggles that followed. At the end of this period, even though the risings had been suppressed, Alevi beliefs and culture emerged in a consolidated form based on the teachings of Haci Bektas, an important poet and philosopher who had been the chief disciple of Ilyas Baba. He preached the love of humanity as the highest goal for people and in fact rejected the five basic principles of Islam and much other religious dogma.

In the 14th and early 15th century a group of brilliant followers spread the teachings of Haci Bektas and thus consolidated Aleviism in its Bektasi form as the main sect embracing the Anatolian masses.

The rise of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Shia Safavid state in Iran, which had its roots in the same



sects as Anatolian Aleviism, profoundly affected the position of the Alevi in Turkey.

The Ottoman dynasty in its early days made use of Aleviism to win over sections of the Anatolian population during its initial conquests. However, once the Ottomans moved away from tribal roots and began to build a centralised, authoritarian state they quickly adopted the Sunni brand of Islam which was better fitted to be the ruling ideology of such a state. This was especially so after the Ottoman sultans (or Padishas) assumed the title of Caliph and claimed to be the leaders of Islam. In Iran on the other hand, the Safavid rulers cast themselves in the role of protectors of Shiaism and Aleviism and encouraged a series of massive peasant rebellions in 15th century Anatolia against Ottoman rule. The rebels were known as "Kizilbas" (redhead) after the colour of the turbans of supporters of the Iranian Shah Ismail. This is a term still used in a derogatory way against Alevi in Turkey today.

The Kizilbas risings lasted many years and were suppressed with great ferocity by the Ottomans at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives.

These risings were followed in the early 16th century by another series of rebellions in Anatolia known as the Celali revolt. Again Alevi played the leading part in what were essentially revolts by peasants and others, both against excessive taxation levied by local feudal landholders and the increasingly heavy handed rule of the Ottoman centralised state. The most outstanding figure of this period was a Bektasi disciple, Pir Sultan Abdal, an Alevi religious leader and poet, who was finally executed by the Ottomans after refusing to sing a song in praise of the Sultan. Today in Turkey songs by and about him are still popular among Alevi and democratic people.

Meanwhile, in Iran, the adoption of Shiaism as the state ideology gradually led to it shedding its tolerant aspects and developing into the bigoted and inhuman belief system whose latest stage we are witnessing in Iran today.

In Anatolia on the other hand, centuries of brutal suppression and resistance to state authority led Aleviism to develop as a movement fighting against injustice operating in semi-clandestine conditions.

Aleviism became the banner under which generations of Anatolian people fought against the oppression of the Ottoman rulers. As a result, it has become traditional for people of Alevi background to support or participate in



At a traditional gathering, Alevi act out the butchery of their ancestors at the hands of the Ottoman sultans



democratic movements and revolutionary struggles.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of a secular republic in Turkey in the 1920s, one would have assumed that the Alevi question would have been solved. However this is not the case.

The secularisation of the Turkish Republic was incomplete. The new ruling class of Turkey adopted many of the brutal and arbitrary methods of rule of their Ottoman predecessors. In the early period of the republic outward manifestations of religion such as special clothes and veils were banned, formal equality for women proclaimed, the Arabic script replaced by a Latin alphabet, sacred shrines closed down as were the tarikats (religious orders or lodges) and the teaching of religion in schools ended.

The secular reforms of the first years of the republic were initially welcomed by Alevi who traditionally in Turkey have supported the concept of a secular society.

However, though the Caliphate was abolished, the Sunni clergy remained state employees as in Ottoman times. Through the Directorate of Religious Affairs, the state still supervised religion. This laid the basis for the reintroduction through the back door of a virtual state religion - the Sunni version of Islam.

ALEVI BELIEFS AND CULTURE

As is shown by the above the Alevi's belief system was similar to that found amongst other popular movements against feudalism throughout the world in the Middle Ages. It survived this period thanks to the backwardness and oppression of the Ottoman Empire and a group of remarkable poet-philosophers, whose works took Aleviism away from its Shia origins and gave it a materialist basis disguised as religion.

The specific features of Aleviism include: a rejection of most Islamic practices including the daily "namaz" (prayers),

fasting and praying in mosques. Alevi do not undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca and do not recognise those who have done so as particularly "holy" as do other branches of Islam. Instead of a priest, the Alevi tended to form organisations best described as lodges headed by an individual called a "dede" who more closely resembled a village wiseman or bard. Some were based in one village and others were itinerant in the Sufi tradition. This role is usually passed down in one family and entails poetic or musical ability. In modern conditions, dedes still function in many villages though the tendency is for this particular institution to decline.

An interesting feature of Alevi life is the high status of women. In the development of Aleviism women have played a prominent role. The concept of prayers in Islam is replaced in Aleviism with an event called a "Cem" where the men, women and children of the community assemble together and discuss a wide variety of subjects with the dede, sing songs and perform a special dance together called "Semah".

Music plays a key role in Aleviism and in fact Alevi songs with their recurring themes of resistance to oppression and love for humanity form the bulk of Turkish folk music.

Alevi music, which in form probably most closely resembles the original music of the Turkmen nomads, is the chief distinguishing feature of this belief system and because of its subject matter remains popular in Turkey today. This has been particularly so in recent years during times of intense repression, usually following one of the periodical military coups. At such times, when all outlets for democratic expression are suppressed, traditional Alevi music has risen in popularity and become a means whereby the masses can still openly express their protest against the prevailing social order.

Centuries of oppression have led to Alevi ritual taking on the form of a clandestine meeting. And in fact, even the shape of the type of saz (traditional stringed musical instrument) - used by Alevi musicians - has been dictated by the need for

the performer to be able to conceal it in his clothes while travelling to a "Cem".

MODERN TIMES

The reintegration of state and religion in Turkey got under way after the Second World War. It developed in parallel with the rise of revolutionary struggles and worker militancy.

In the late 1960s students and workers began strikes and actions for democracy and better living standards. In the early revolutionary and workers movements of this time, a disproportionately high number of the activists came from an Alevi background. This can be largely explained by the fact that Alevi traditions with their rejection of oppression and the ideology of exploited masses made it easy for people with that background to be drawn into modern struggles for democracy.

In the 1970s as the economic crisis in Turkey deepened, these actions took on a more revolutionary character. Society polarised. On the one hand fascist organisations - primarily the NAP (Nationalist Action Party), popularly known as the "Grey Wolves", carried out a campaign against left-wing and progressive people; on the other, workers, students and revolutionary organisations defended themselves. People of Alevi origin out of all proportion to their numbers in society joined working class and revolutionary organisations.

While the army was groomed to be the main force to crush the left, the Islamic card was also played. The state reintroduced Islamic worship and (Islamic) religious education in primary schools. Islamic secret societies connected with fascist or right wing parties began to function more openly. Fascists incited Sunni believers against the Alevi community. This resulted in the appalling Corum and Kahramanmaras massacres.

In late December 1978, gangs of fascists invaded the town of Kahramanmaras. The doors of the homes and business premises of Alevis were marked with red crosses. Later, shouting slogans against Alevis, communists and "unbelievers", mobs rampaged through the streets dragging out Alevi people from their homes and butchering over a hundred men, women and children. In addition, 1000 people were seriously injured and most Alevi people's homes and property destroyed. Thousands fled from the town for good. While the massacre was in progress, the army and gendarmerie stood by. They only moved in towards the end when revolutionaries and Alevis began to offer armed resistance - and then only to disarm and arrest the resisters!



THE MENACE OF FUNDAMENTALISM

The fascist 12th September 1980 military coup took place under the cover of restoring "order" and against right and left "extremism." However it was soon apparent that its main aim was to crush the left and working class movement and remove what few democratic gains had been won in the 1970s.

Evren and the other junta leaders projected themselves as followers of Ataturk (founder of the Turkish Republic) and the army as guardians of the secular nature of the state. Reality soon proved otherwise.

Though a few NAP killers were hung and a few Islamic fundamentalists imprisoned, the authorities soon freed most fundamentalists while thousands of democrats and leftists were sentenced to long years of imprisonment.

During their attempts to build a monolithic fascist state, the junta continued a massive programme of mosque building and introduced the teaching of (Sunni) religion into secondary education. Evren himself larded his often eccentric speeches with quotes from the Koran and hadiths (sayings of the prophet).

The connection between the regime and religion was exposed when it was revealed that the notorious Saudi financed Rabitat (World Moslem League) had, by agreement with the government, been helping pay the wages of Turkish clergy sent to conduct religious education among Turkish migrant workers in Europe. This had been going on throughout 1981-1982. The form of Islam rammed down the throats of the migrants was naturally Sunni.

The new Turkish Constitution introduced in 1982 claims Turkey is a secular republic. However, as before, the powerful Religious Affairs Directorate of the Republic proves otherwise. This institution is manned almost entirely by Sunnis and they do not hesitate to use their official authority to impose their brand of Islam on society. The head of the Religious Affairs Directorate behaves like the Seyhulislam who, under the Ottoman Empire, was the religious figure responsible for administering the Islamic religion. Religious education has also been made compulsory in secondary education. Even Christian students are forced to take Islamic courses.

Today the Turkish regime both overtly and covertly is encouraging the rise of Islamic fundamentalism mainly for two reasons:

Firstly and most importantly, to build up a final barrier to defend the existing social order if it is threatened by the rising democratic struggle of the population, especially the working class. In previous periods such as 1980 the army was used to put down any such moves. However following the 1980 coup which discredited the army in the eyes of the people and seriously weakened the military effectiveness of the armed forces, it has become necessary to find a new force which could if required, implement a fascist dictatorship. This role can be fulfilled by merging Islamic fundamentalism with "traditional fascists" of the NAP variety.

The second reason for the growth of fundamentalism is the Turkish regime's desire to penetrate Middle East markets. At the same time, investment from such countries as Saudi Arabia is being encouraged in Turkey.

The form taken by fundamentalism in Turkey, given its traditional role as a state ideology, is naturally Sunni Islam.

Despite the official secularism of the Turkish republic the Tarikats and other Islamic secret societies have continued to operate throughout the years in Turkey traditionally providing support for reactionary parties and politicians. Today the Sunni Tarikats form a sort of influential freemasonry, especially in the business world.



Fundamentalists

The Sunni fundamentalists are well entrenched at all levels of the regime in Turkey. The prime minister, Turgut Ozal and his family are closely connected with the reactionary Sunni Naksibendi secret society.

The Naksibendi is one of the most secretive yet pervasive Sunni Tarikats. In the 1970s some members of it began to remodel it along the lines of the Opus Dei catholic movement in Franco's Spain. That is, it became a movement of well-educated, modern technocrats and businessmen dedicated to combining an advanced economy with a reactionary, theocratic based state. A shining star in this movement was none other than the present prime minister of Turkey, Turgut Ozal.

The Naksibendi, whose ideas include the belief that Alevis "have not got a right even to live" and its offshoot the Suleymanci concentrate on winning students and intellectuals to Sunni Islam. To this end, and with state encouragement, they set up hostels for students at the big universities and sponsor poor students in higher education. Under cover of these charitable functions, they conduct intense religious brainwashing of these students.

Within the ruling ANAP (Motherland Party) the dominant faction is known as the "Holy Alliance". This consists of ex-members of the Islamic fundamentalist Nationalist Salvation Party (banned in 1980), the fascist Nationalist Action Party (banned in 1980) and some "modern" Sunni fundamentalists. The party also contains a "liberal" wing which is more Western orientated and opposed to too much religion. As a result, Ozal performs a balancing act to avoid splitting the party and antagonising such forces as the EEC. However, it is becoming ever more clear where the preferences of Turkey's "ruling circles" lie.

Ozal, who is supposed to be the leader of a secular state has paraded his religious beliefs and his partiality for Sunnism by twice making the pilgrimage to Mecca, something no Turkish sultan ever did.

An important financial support for Sunni fundamentalism in Turkey is provided by the finance capital of the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia. One of the main figures involved in helping "Islamic capital" to invest in Turkey is none other than Korkut Ozal, brother of the Turkish prime minister.

As has already been shown above, a key area for the fundamentalists is the education system. The Ministry of Education at its higher levels is almost entirely manned by ex-MSP (Nationalist Salvation Party) members. They have reintroduced the teaching of religious myths at all levels and spearheaded an attack against the teaching of Darwinism and other scientific non-religious ideas at even university level.

After the 1980 coup the teaching profession was thoroughly purged of all progressives including people of

Alevi origin. Today the Ministry of Education, as a matter of policy, invariably sends teachers from a Sunni background to teach in Alevi villages. These teachers apart from attempting to indoctrinate their pupils are also expected to report to the security organs any "suspicious" social and political activities in the village.

By 1988 there were 384 official religious high schools indoctrinating 290,000 students. In addition the number of legal Koranic courses in the Arabic language has risen to 4,691 involving 633,000 children. There are also probably 5,000 illegal Koranic courses to which the authorities turn a blind eye.

The Education Ministry has encouraged or at least tolerated the proliferation of Educational Foundations in Turkey financed by Saudi and Gulf money.

The number of personnel employed by the Sunni controlled Religious Affairs Directory went up from 53,582 in 1984 to 84,717 in 1988.

The Directorate has presided over a Mosque building programme bigger than anything seen in Turkey since the Middle Ages. New Mosques are being built at a rate of well over 1,500 every year. Of these, many are being built in Alevi villages against the wishes of the inhabitants.

Mosques have been opened in many public buildings, offices and enterprises. Attendance at mosque is becoming a "must" for any aspiring bureaucrat who wants to get on in public service.

Turkish society is not traditionally inclined to Islamic fundamentalism. In the past the popularity of Aleviism among the labouring sections of the population and more recently, strong revolutionary and democratic movements and the growing urban working class have formed powerful barriers to attempts to return Turkey to the dark ages of religious obscurantism. The most reactionary forces in Turkish society today are trying to take advantage of the weakness of the democratic forces following years of state terror to impose their backward ideas on Turkey. A first step along this road is to destroy the traditional support for secularism - the Alevi community.

The attitude of Sunni religious figures to Alevis is implacably hostile. Even today, Islamic authorities state that for an Alevi to become a "proper muslim" he must first convert to Christianity or some other religion before converting to Islam. The Sunni clergy consider Alevis to be "worse" than pagan.

ALEVIS TODAY

Alevis constitute a sizeable portion of the urban working class as well as villagers in South and Central Anatolia.

As pointed out before, their background makes them join left and progressive movements and organisations in a proportion greater than their actual weight in society.

Today, the growth of fundamentalism is leading many democrats to realise that attacks on the Alevi community and its traditions has led to the weakening of a major barrier against the spread of religious bigotry in Turkish society.

Alevis, because of their progressive traditions and because Aleviism is more of a culture than a religion, do not put forward special claims for their beliefs. This has led to much of the "petty oppression" they are subjected to in society going unnoticed by outsiders.

Alevis can be found in many walks of life including culture and even as members of parliament.

OPPRESSION ON THE ALEVIS

In the face of state-backed Islamic fundamentalism the Alevi community finds itself under the sort of pressure not experienced since the days of the Ottoman Empire.

Alevi face two and threefold oppression; first as traditional supporters of the left, secondly as Alevi and third, in the case of some, as Kurds.

Alevi refugees fleeing to Britain in 1989 have brought stories of wide ranging persecution particularly in the villages of the Maras and Tunceli regions. Alevi villagers have seen state land surrounding their villages given to Sunni farmers, they have been subjected to constant raids by the paramilitary gendarmerie accompanied by collective beatings, mass humiliations and arrests on trumped-up charges.

Alevi, because of the better position of women in their communities are seen as morally suspect by Islamic fundamentalists. This leads to all sorts of scandalous stories and myths to which minority communities which are "different" often find themselves subjected.

An example of this was contained in the crossword section of the main Turkish Islamic newspaper *Zaman* which in its crossword clue mentioned "an anti-Islam nymphomaniac sect". The answer was Alevi.

Particularly the use of the education system by religious fanatics is causing untold tragedies and damage. Children from Alevi backgrounds are humiliated or made to feel ashamed of their origins thus leading to many crisis in Alevi family relations.

Alevi school children are forced to perform daily religious prayers - an act which is deeply offensive to their beliefs.

Textbooks produced by the Sunni-dominated Ministry of Education contain sections on Alevi beliefs which contain the most disgusting and untrue statements. For instance, a text book on philosophy issued just before the 1980 coup and which was distributed to primary school pupils claims that Alevi fathers practice incest with their daughters as part of their rituals. This book was finally withdrawn after a massive outcry. However other text books still being used contain similar statements.

Alevi villagers, like many Kurds, are being forced out of their villages and dispersed to the cities or abroad thus breaking up their cultural cohesion. This is particularly the case with Alevi communities in the regions of Maras and Tunceli who are being driven off the land by a mixture of political and economic persecution.

The most common type of discrimination was referred to by Turkish MP Arif Sag in 1989 who spoke of job discrimination against many Alevi in different parts of Turkey. He said that "they never say we won't give you this job because you're Alevi but excuses are still found not to employ you".

Alevi's are also subject to "quiet discrimination" of the sort which when exposed is officially denied:

- * Alevi are barred from the higher echelons of the Civil service.
- * No Alevi unless he can conceal his origins can graduate from military schools.
- * Alevi, especially in traditionally hard line Islamic districts, find themselves denied jobs altogether or employed on a last hired and first fired basis.
- * Religious leaders and official publications systematically insult their beliefs and culture.
- * Alevi music, which forms the bulk of Turkish folk music and is popular in society is seldom performed on state controlled radio and television.

* Alevi children are forced to perform Islamic prayers at schools and listen to offensive attacks on the beliefs of their parents.

* Government rules stipulate that all funeral services must take place in a mosque. This means Alevi people are forced to enter mosques which is against their deepest held beliefs and endure Sunni rituals over their dead nearest and dearest.

* The state denies permission for Alevi villagers to build Cemevi (meeting houses) but builds Sunni mosques in villages even where there are no Sunni believers.

* Political activists from an Alevi background detained by police find themselves subjected to abuse about their origins and severe torture.

KURDS AND ALEVIS

The approximately ten million Kurdish people in Turkey constitute an oppressed nation within the borders of the Turkish state. They are denied all national and cultural rights including the right to speak their own language freely. In addition they are denied the right to self-determination.

In religious background, the Kurdish people are overwhelmingly Sunni but some 15% are Alevi.

It is no coincidence that the province of Tunceli in South East Anatolia has suffered some of the worst forms of military and police repression since the 1980 coup against the Kurdish liberation struggle. Tunceli is the area where the people are not only Kurdish but also Alevi.

POINTS FOR ACTION

In the interests of democracy in Turkey today it is necessary to campaign against all forms of oppression both subtle and not so subtle being used against the Alevi community.

The Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey sees two special areas of the struggle for democracy in Turkey: One is support for the Kurdish people's struggle for all national rights including the right to self-determination. The other is to end discrimination against the Alevi community in Turkey.

To further work on these areas the CDDRT is establishing two sub-committees to cover work on Kurdistan and the Alevi question.

The fight to end attacks on the Alevi community is at the same time the struggle for a truly secular Turkey and against the menace posed to all democratic beliefs and ideals by Islamic fundamentalism.

With this in mind we believe the following demands which have the approval of the vast majority of the peoples of Turkey should be fought for:

- * **Strict separation of state and religion in Turkey.**
- * **Strict separation of the education system from religion.**
- * **An end to the harrassment and discrimination of people on religious grounds in Turkey.**
- * **An end to all forms of job discrimination against Alevi.**

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