



WOMEN IN TURKEY

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**Speeches from the Briefing Conference on
Women in Turkey, held at TUC Congress
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BRIEFING CONFERENCE OF WOMEN IN TURKEY

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years all aspects of women's role and position in society have become a major issue in Europe, America and elsewhere. Masses of material has been written on the 'women question' and many aspects explored.

It therefore comes as something of a surprise that so little, internationally at least, has been written about the situation of women in modern Turkey.

Turkey is a country that geographically and politically forms a bridge between Europe and the Middle East. A society with an islamic past, with all that entails for the status of women. But also a country which is a member of the OECD and NATO and is aspiring to membership of the European Economic Community (EEC).

Turkey is a medium level developed country and like others in that category has experienced acute upheaval. Super-exploitation of the working class by local and international monopolies, mass migration from rural areas to the cities or western Europe and the rapid development of an industrial working class

have since the early 1970s lead to violent political upheavals.

In the 1970s Turkey experienced a situation of near revolution with political violence, land seizures, factory occupations and the rapid development of mass trade union and democratic organisations. In all these events women played a prominent role.

The 1980 coup led to the suppression of most of the existing women's organisations and the suspension of trade union activity.

Following the 1983 army-supervised elections which brought the Motherland Party regime of Turgut Özal to power, political debate and activity — within narrow limits — began to revive. The contradictions between Islamic elements within the regime and the needs of modern economic development helped to fuel debate about women's place in society. Intellectual circles began to toy with European ideas of feminism and the problems of the legal rights of women came to the fore.

The first post-coup political and trade union demonstrations and rallies have seen working women participating actively and in large numbers.

The revival of trade union activity and the struggle against the draconian labour laws and drastic decline in the worker's living standards have led to increasing mass action by women workers. The struggle for women's rights in Turkey today is almost totally bound-up with the fight of women workers and the re-emerging working class movement.

It is in this context that a group of trade unionists, democrats and Turkish community organisations in London felt that more information on the position of Turkish women in society and the trade unions in Turkey and as migrant workers was required.

On the 14th June 1986, at the headquarters of the Trades Union Congress in London a briefing conference on the situation of women in Turkey was held, chaired by Margeret Witham, Women's officer of the Greater London Association of Trades Councils. This pamphlet consists of the main speeches delivered at the conference.

The conference itself was unique in that it was the first time since at least 1980 that it had been possible to organise a platform representing such a broad range of views on the situation of working women in Turkey.

We hope that this pamphlet will contribute to greater interest in and support for women, especially working women in Turkey, who are on the thresh old of a great struggle for their own emancipation and for greater democracy generally.



NO REAL MOVES TO DEMOCRACY

Carole Tongue MEP

I am very pleased to have been invited and be with you this afternoon at what is the first conference, I have been told, on women in Turkey and migrant women here in the U.K. since the 1980 coup in Turkey. And I hope it is reassuring to you that many of us and particularly in our parliament here but also in the European Parliament have not ceased to follow events very very carefully since 1980. And for four years before I became a member I've worked with the European Parliament expert on Turkey: David Blackman, many of you may know him, we monitored day by day exactly what was happening in Turkey so we could expose the fact that under no circumstances were there any real moves being made towards democracy. It is one of the great ironies I feel that since the coup women have, in a terrifying way, been afforded equal treatment in Turkey. By that I mean equal treatment in terms of bannings, imprisonment, detention and some of the most appalling tortures which I don't think we need to go into today but we are very aware of.

Carole Tongue is the Labour Party Member of the European Parliament for London East.

As we know the Turkish trade-union movement has all but been gagged, silenced and the trial still continues today of DISK trade-unions. Over 1,500 DISK members are still on trial, 78 members still threatened with the death sentence.

I have to suffer members of the parliament I sit in trying to tell me that somehow Turkey is a member, a fit member of the Council of Europe and for possible membership of the EEC. We know that to be quite laughable and if we think that we have suffered a loss of trade-union rights, particularly for women here in the U.K. under the present conservative government, we should look to Turkey and see what women and men suffer there. I am sure that Thatcher would love in many circumstances to follow a similar example to what has happened in Turkey.

I think one of the very few things we have to rejoice in is that the trial against the Turkish Peace Association — unless you can tell me differently — is finally over.

I have been looking at the briefing today that the CDDRT has prepared on women in Turkey today. It just illustrates the kind of economic strait-jacket which women in Turkey are suffering. Some of the lowest wages, not just in Western Europe, but I was horrified to read here and elsewhere, as low as a third of the kind of poverty wages that women are suffering in Taiwan or Singapore. More than 10 or 12 hours a day, strikes unknown and repressed and no trade-union protection or very little. I think we should appreciate the bravery that women are showing somewhere like Turkey where their political reality is so different from what we have here. We may think that rights since the coming of Thatcher to power here have been curtailed. But it is just nothing on the scale of what has happened in Turkey. And the kind of repression generally suffered by Turkish women which was brought home to me when I saw the film "YOL" by Yilmaz Güney. That film for me, taught me, I think more about the real situation in Turkey and how women are oppressed than anything I had read up till now. I continue to recommend people to go and see that film wherever it is showing. So our solidarity with Turkish workers both in Turkey and here is more needed than ever before and I am so pleased that such a conference has been organised.

Millions of Turkish women are working without any protection. And the situation for example of the women homeworkers here: Now that is something which is not nearly enough highlighted here in Britain. The number of homeworkers we have working for a few pence an hour, often in no trade-union at all. An example of how this might be combatted was brought home to me at a trade-union conference I attended in Italy, where women there have organised to demand that their companies disclose a list of women homeworkers they are employing and they have actively tried to go out into the homes of those women and recruit them into their trade union, and to fight for an increase in salary. This is something we should be demanding, and exposing the number of homeworkers that companies we work for may use.

I will be brief, because I have come here to listen to particularly Turkish women to hear about their experiences. So finally I will just pledge to you that we will continue our work which has been going on in the European parliament since the coup, to expose continually the torture and repression of men and women in Turkey and we will do our damndest to stop any recognition by the EEC of the Turkish regime. I feel it is deplorable, as we all do, that they are still sitting in the Council of Europe they are still in the OECD and we have members of the parliament I sit in trying to tell us that real democracy has been restored in Turkey.

We will continue to block the fourth financial protocol—this is a protocol whereby the EEC has been in the past giving money to Turkey, it is thanks to the Left in the European Parliament that we have stopped this protocol being paid. I have to say that the United States of America have stepped in to replace in many circumstances the money we have stopped. But so far we have continued to win the necessary votes. You'll be pleased to hear that this week for the first time we got a historic declaration signed by the three institutions of the EEC: The Council of Ministers, the European Commission, and the Parliament on the necessity to fight xenophobia and racism in Europe. And that was thanks to my labour colleague Glynn Ford who set up a special committee of inquiry into the rise of fascism and racism in Europe culminating in that declaration. And we have a very good report from that committee which if people here would like, they could write to me, I am ordering copies now. In that report it is very clearly laid down the kind of rights we want to see for immigrant, migrant and ethnic minority workers in Europe, that they share *exactly* the same rights as we, as indigenous citizens have, and this is something that is spelt out very clearly.

I will be bringing back, I hope, many posters on the necessity to fight racism and xenophobia and distribute them for example, to schools in my area, so that we teach children about the very urgent necessity to fight the racism that we know exists in this country.

Just to say finally. The internationalisation of labour demands a joint fight by trade unionists not only across Europe but across the world. This is what is urgently needed, as we see capital and particularly the multi-nationals spreading internationalisation and exploitation of working people. I pledge our support and the support of my colleagues to do everything that we can to highlight particularly the plight of women in this country and women in Turkey in the future.

Thank you very much.





THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Zuhal Meriç

First of all, I would like to thank the organizers of this conference.

I am speaking here today, as a person who has actively been involved in the Turkish working women's movement. I took part in the foundation work of the Progressive Women's Association (PWA), and after that I was, for a long time an active member. As is known the PWA was founded in 1975 and was banned by the government in early 1980.

Women in Turkey are second-class citizens as they are, to this or that extent, in all capitalist countries. They are face to face with inequalities and oppression in their daily lives, that is, at work, at home, at school, before the laws, etc. Working women are under double oppression both as labourers and as women.

As capitalism develops, woman is drawn more actively into the social and economic spheres as cheap labour. Thus she concretely feels the close link between the oppression of women and the exploitation of workers. She grasps that it is not "men" in general but a definite class, the exploiting class, which is responsible for the oppression of women. She notices that oppression and

Zuhal Meric, a leading founder-member of the Progressive Women's Association in Turkey is at the moment in exile living in Britain.

exploitation of her kind is not a destiny at all, and she takes her part in the fight side by side with the working class. This is what started to happen in Turkey too.

With such a perspective now let us have a look at women's rights in Turkey.

Even during the last period of the Ottoman Empire, the world situation on the one hand, and, though very weak, the internal capitalist development of the country on the other hand, necessitated the shift from Islamic Law (Shariat) which was already obstructing the participation of women in working life.

But by that time, the world had witnessed the 8th March in the USA in 1857 and the Paris Commune in 1871. The first socialist women's organisation was already founded in 1893. A struggle for women's rights was already being waged all over the world. The fact that women didn't accept their so-called "fate" was being clearly observed.

On the other hand, the capitalist development of Ottoman society had brought onto the agenda the participation of women in working life.

For instance, the Islamic Association for the Promotion of Women's Work, which was founded in 1916 in İstanbul, had the aim of finding jobs for women so that they could get used to earning their own livings. It is not insignificant for those years that, only one-and-a-half months after its foundation, the association received applications from 14,000 women.

Given such a background, the 1924 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the Civil Code of 1926 recognised relatively more rights for women than Islamic Law (Shariat).

But, first of all, these rights were progress only in comparison to the past, that is to say, the Ottoman period. In themselves they were insufficient and they had several reactionary limitations and clauses.

Secondly, under capitalism, all the democratic rights which are recognised of the workers and labourers are, to this or that extent, hollow, they remain on paper. Since there is a socio-economic mechanism which is based on exploitation and inequality, some people are virtually in a position where they are not able to



make use of those “rights”.

Take for instance a country with millions of unemployed, a country where wages are not enough even to fill the hungry stomachs. Here the words “freedom to travel” are just empty words for most labourers and workers. During the period we mentioned above, Turkey was suffering not only from the development of capitalism but more from the insufficiency of it. Under such circumstances, women’s rights have in practice been just nil.

Let me try to enrich my argument with some numerical facts and examples.

Take women’s suffrage. It was not recognized at the beginning. Only 10 years after the approval of the 1924 Constitution in 1934 was it recognised.

Well, some may say that even so, it is earlier than some other countries. But just to what extent have women been able to use their right in a period which covers more than 50 years? According to figures I have here, in a period of 40 years, there have been elected 6424 representatives to the Grand National Assembly, 116 of them being women. That makes 1.8 %.

This is so not because of the lack of ability of women in using their rights. In order for them to be able to put such rights into practice, women have got to be in a different social position. There must be policies such as equal opportunities for women, for example, in education and in working life. However, 40 years after universal suffrage the ratio of female students with a rural background who have qualified in the university entrance examinations, to total number of students was 2.6 %, whereas females from rural areas make up 51 % of all women in Turkey, and women are half of the population.

Also the clauses of the Civil Code of 1926 contradict women’s suffrage of 1934. This Civil Code of Turkey usually makes a good example of in how backward a context women’s rights are recognised. Take, for instance, paragraph 159. It reads:

“Work of women other than homework depends on her husband’s permit.. a wife may be engaged in work or a handicraft with her husband’s explicitly or implicitly expressed permission.”

Another example which I would like to mention here is paragraph 155, which defines the role given to the husband. It reads:

“It is the husband who represents the unity of the act of marriage,” whereas the role of the wife according to same paragraph, is limited to the permanent needs of the house”.

As you may see, woman’s right to raise her voice as an independent citizen is obstructed. Woman who does not have the right to decide independently on where to work; or woman whose domain of independent action does not go beyond her house... How can she independently use her rights to vote and be elected? And to what extent?

One of the most degrading laws for women is the Turkish Penal Code. According to paragraph 440 of the TPC, a woman who has committed adultery is to be punished with from 6 months to 3 years imprisonment. Whereas the man who has committed the same crime, might be punished only under certain

circumstances. These “circumstances” are described in paragraph 441 as, “... a man who beholds an unmarried woman... inside the house where he resides with his wife, or at a place which is publicly recognisable...”, etc...

This is simply to declare that all women who commit adultery immediately go to jail, while man's circumstances are to be “considered”. If there are not any “bad” circumstances men aren't to be found guilty.

As it is very easy to see, the right of equal opportunities at work, in education and at home, is socially and legally *not* recognised for women. Legal equality is yet to be established. Rights which are already recognised by laws are either insufficient or just hollow statements.

To argue that such and such rights for women do exist, and that they have to learn how to use them, is therefore shortsightedness, being unable to grasp the extent of the women's question or simply ignoring it.

After all, the working women's movement in Turkey has already gone much farther than the existing incomplete legal rights.

In the 1960's the class struggle became more intense and mass movements increased both in quantity and quality. Open mass meetings, occupations and strikes were sweeping Turkey. As a consequence, working and labouring women took a more massive part in this struggle in the 1970's.



The PWA which was founded in 1975 began its work with the aim of placing the women's question on a class basis. Being conscious that women were under double oppression and exploitation as both women and labourers, it began to organise- To organise on such a basis was such a deep need that the PWA very soon became a loud voice of women which was heard all over Turkey.

The fact that the PWA had such massive support is in itself a proof of where the working women stood in that period. It is also a proof of to what extent women had a conscious understanding of the women's question. .

Working women of today are much more experienced and conscious. Those years spent under fascism and today's unbearable social pains, have sharpened them a lot. Added to this are the lessons of the revolutionary period before 12th September 1980.

Among these lessons are some deficiencies of the PWA, which went side by side with its successes. Especially in its last years, the PWA was *behind* the developments of Turkey, and consequently hindered developments rather than accelerated them. Labouring women of today's Turkey look farther than the PWA and are in clear need of a more advanced organisation.

TODAY



Now, let us have a brief look at the situation today.

It would be deeply misleading to assume that the women of Turkey are passive and insensitive to everyday problems. If you do consider that there are thousands of handcuffs made up of bans on the organisation of the working class and the people, then it would be easier to grasp why organised actions are yet to appear in a more widespread fashion. But one should also add the fact that all workers, labourers and especially working women are deeply angry, they are full of rage.

These feelings of anger which have accumulated under conditions of mass unemployment, high rates of inflation and oppression, manifest themselves on several occasions in various forms. Small street actions, road blockings and mass occupations of municipal buildings are increasingly taking place.

The year of 1986 is already full of such actions. Recently, stall-keepers and their customers made an illegal protest march through the streets to the Town Hall of a district of İstanbul, because the district bazaar was to be abolished. Most of the participants were women.

Almost in the same days, 1500 tobacco workers, most of whom were women, made protests against illegal reductions in their bonus payments.

Every day we read about some actions in which women have participated. And this evidently increasing mobilisation of women is also being followed by the bourgeoisie. It tries to cool them down, and if not, divert them. On the one hand, those ideas which regard the women question only as a question of this sex, are already being promoted in the market. These currents try to sow the seeds of feminism among the working women who have participated in the struggles for democratic rights before 12th September 1980, and thus have become more conscious of the women's question. They are by trying this, striving hard to make them blind to the genuine problem and hence, keep a class perspective away from women.

On the other hand, some degrading articles of the laws are being changed; women's associations are being founded; and legal political parties direct their propaganda also to women.



Previously, they promoted Mrs. Semra Özal (wife of the Prime Minister Turgut Özal) as the “first lady”, obviously copying the Americans. Her luxury life, her “elegant” dresses, and her jewels were made top issues in the press. They had wrongly thought that the wife of the premier could be used as a source of national pride. This thought backfired. Today they try a somehow different, more “popular” fashion, and show her eating beans and onions, or shopping in the Sümerbank-shop (where mostly poor people shop). They strive hard to give Semra Özal an image that she is not just a greedy person but a person with “virtues”.

Recently we have also got something called a “female council of ministers”. As is known, the legitimacy of the government in Turkey is nil even as regards to a western type of bourgeois government- And now, as if the members of this government — who were promoted to these posts after the elections of November 1983, which were a blend of tyranny and jugglery — are not enough, their wives are available in the forefront of the market. And this is called the “female council of ministers”(!)

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The aim of this arrogant initiative is to get the eyes of working women focused on the active wives of our “respected” ministers. But we should also have a look at the “activities” of this female council of ministers:

For example: “the female council of ministers met under the leadership of Mrs. Semra Özal, at Gölbaşı. During the meeting participants discussed issues of fashion, food recipes, activities of the association and slimming diets. However, the participants ate 10 different cakes, 75 portions of stuffing (dolma). 18 lbs. of chicken, 24 lbs. of pastry, 180 pieces of stuffed meat-balls, and 10 pots of yoghurt.” (*Tercuman*, 1st May 1986)

With such a meeting, the female council of ministers showed what efficient and productive activities they have for the working women of Turkey.

It is also important to mention the "Trust for the Promotion of Turkish Women" which was recently founded, under the leadership of course, of Mrs. Özal. The interesting list of the leaders of this trust reads as follows:

Semra Özal, from Motherland Party (ANAP)

Aynur Yurtçu, (wife of the province leader of ANAP in Izmir)
from İztaş Holding,

Füsün Topbaş, (a relative of a provincial leader of ANAP) from Bahariye Textiles Co.,

Lale Tara, from Enka Holding,

Emine Cerrahoğlu, from Cerrahoğlu Group,

Türkan Sabancı, from Sabancı Holding,

Mine D. Karamehmet from Çukurova Holding,

Meral Kubalı, from Yaşar Holding,

Necla Kavala, from Kavala Group,

Necdet Tahiroğlu, from Tahiroğlu Group,

Güzide Kılıç, from Rothmans.

This Trust is made up of the monopoly-holding bourgeois who are women only in sex. It is almost the women's section of ANAP. It can promote only the interests of the Turkish monopoly bourgeoisie.

I mentioned earlier, the women of Turkey are well aware of the fact that to acquire rights is a matter of a fight for them. Hence their interest is not directed to associations whose sole aims are to distort the women question, or to trusts led by bourgeois wives of bourgeois leaders.

Women of Turkey are looking for organizations which will put the women question on a correct basis.

Those meetings of bourgeois women with pastries and cakes can do nothing but raise more rage among the working women. Working women's wrath is yet to emerge!

Working women of our country shall actively participate in the struggle for bread and democracy, as well as the struggle for women's liberation. For they are inseparable from each other.

Dear guests,

A correct approach to Turkey will allow anybody to see what I have told you now. This is the reality. It is the truth. And all the more, truth is revolutionary.



THE TRADE UNION POSITION IN TURKEY

Rahime Akdoğan

Respected chairperson and friends,

I am very pleased to be here as a representative of Turk-Is, the trade union confederation of Turkey, at this meeting devoted to the topic of women workers and trade unions in Turkey. I sincerely believe that these meetings will increase the cooperation and solidarity between our organisations. I would like to start by thanking you for providing this opportunity.

According to the 10th article of the 1982 Constitution (*of Turkey*), “everyone is equal before the law without discrimination as to religion, race, colour, sex, political opinions, philosophical belief, profession or similar reasons”. This fundamental principle stated in the constitution solves the question of discrimination between men and women in the legal system in Turkey. Like the other laws which make up Turkey’s legal system, the labour laws too are applied to “workers” without discrimination between men and women in accordance with this fundamental approach of the constitution. For this reason, in evaluating the situation of women workers, their rights and their relations with

Rahime Akdoğan is head of the Women’s Bureau of Turk-Is (Turkish Trade Union Confederation)

the trade unions, one must take the position of workers as one's starting point.

Modern trade unionism in Turkey began with adoption of the 1961 constitution which guaranteed the freedom of working people to organise, and the right of collective bargaining, including to strike. The guarantees included in the constitution were put into practice in 1963 with the trade union law No.274, the collective bargaining law No.275, and the laws governing strikes and lockouts. With the adoption of these laws many workers became organised in the Turkish trade union movement and began to take advantage of the right to collective bargaining. The 1963 innovations were widely explained as a beginning of democracy in working life.

The guarantees brought by the 1961 Constitution, which accorded with the legal system in Western democracies, opened the way to a series of further modern innovations in the 1963-70 period. In 1964 workers were given the right to participate in the administration of their workplaces, while in the same year public sector employees were given the right to establish trade unions and freely become trade union members.

A law governing civil servants was passed in 1965 which developed the rules for negotiations in government offices. In 1965 all the branches of social insurance were merged and in 1967 the labour laws were extended to cover everyone outside the agricultural sector.

In the same period all workers without any discrimination were able to take advantage of all the opportunities provided by the free collective bargaining and strike system.

The gradual deterioration of the economic conditions of Turkey and the turning into violence, however limited, of events that had started in the universities, opened the way for a military intervention in 1970. In 1980 the military once again intervened directly; however, in a short period free elections led to the establishment of the present government. The intervention which took place in the democratic structure in a short time led to changes in the laws governing workers, first and foremost in the articles of the Constitution which provided legal guarantees for the workers. First, civil servants were deprived of the right to establish trade unions and become members of trade unions, the punishments provided by law were made heavier, and changes made in the law governing associations restricted the possibility of freely taking advantage of trade union rights and freedoms. At the same time, until 1980, there was no direct intervention in regard to the application of the law governing the right to free collective bargaining and to strike.

In the years 1970-80, the workers were able to widely use their rights and freedoms in a manner that accorded with western standards.

As everyone knows, a military intervention was carried out in 1980. I do not think it is appropriate to discuss here the reasons that led to the military intervention, or whether or not these reasons were correct. Rather than the reasons for it, I will try to explain the consequences the intervention had and the problems it led to from the point of view of Turkish workers.

Approximately 9 months before the military intervention, a new economic approach was adopted in Turkey. This economic philosophy took as its aim to alleviate the economic difficulties in which Turkey found itself, in particular to take under control the rate of inflation which had leaped into the hundreds, and reduce the foreign payments deficit. This philosophy that was advanced was a typical IMF remedy. All the conditions of the monetarist policy that has been advanced as the solution to the problems in the capitalist economies and are faced by the international trade union movement, were imposed in Turkey and it was aimed to make them dominant. Nine months after this economic policy was adopted, the soldiers suspended democracy and announced that they had adopted and would apply the same economic programme adopted in January 1980.

Within this framework, trade union rights and freedoms were suspended in the name of bringing inflation under control. The operations of some workers' organisations were suspended and trials were begun. In other words, under the conditions of martial law, attacks against workers' basic rights and against the existence of trade unions came on to the agenda. Under these conditions, the stage was reached of drafting the 1982 Constitution.

The basic lines of the 1982 constitution were aimed at establishing legal guarantees for the monetarist policy adopted in January 1980. On this respect they created a structure that completely contradicted the model envisaged in the 1961 Constitution. The 1982 Constitution severely restricted workers' rights and



Rahime Akdoğan with women on strike at a pharmaceutical factory, 1985.

freedoms, laid the basis for an economic understanding based on the free market economy, and categorically deprived the social state of its function of "protecting the weak".

The stipulations in the Constitution in regard to workers' rights and freedoms contradict international laws, in particular the ILO convention No. 87 in regard to freedom and convention No. 98 in regard to the protection of free collective bargaining rights. The new trade union law and the new laws governing collective bargaining, strikes and lockouts adopted in accordance with this Constitution are of the same nature.

Really with these laws:

1. The rights of workers to freely establish trade unions and freely become members of the union of their choice have been restricted.

2. By openly introducing discrimination among workers about 1 million civil servants have been deprived of the right to establish trade unions and become members of trade unions.

3. Some sections which were accorded the status of workers, for example, teachers and part-time worker-students, have been banned from becoming trade union members.

4. The right of workers to freely determine the rules and internal procedures of their unions has been limited.

5. The right of workers to elect their leaders in complete freedom has been abolished.

6. The right to free collective bargaining has been restricted.

7. The right to strike has been retained only with extreme limitations.

I would like to explain this fundamental impasse and the problems we are experiencing with a few examples.



2,000 women workers take part in a protest organised by Türk-İş in the town of Balıkesir, 1986.

According to the the law, in order to take up a leading position in a trade union one has to have worked as a worker for at least ten years. A leader can only be elected to his post for a period covered by four regular general councils (at most 12 years) and thereafter cannot be elected again until after the next general council period (that is, at most 3 years). If a trade union leader reaches the point of retirement according to the social insurance law, he loses his trade union membership. If a trade union leader takes up any position in any political party body, he loses his position as trade union leader.

Trade unions are banned from taking any joint actions or cooperating with political parties or associations.

Trade unions must submit to the periodic administrative and financial supervision of the state. This supervisory authority is being used as a means of political repression. Every trade union is required to carry out its own internal supervision by officers elected at its own general council meetings. Nevertheless, even this is not considered sufficient and the trade unions also come under the supervision of three different ministries.

From the point of view of using the right to collective self-bargaining, the right to negotiate, there are two obstacles. A trade union body which wishes to conduct collective negotiations must represent at least 10% of the workers working in the given branch of industry. On top of this, the particular trade union must represent at least half of the workers working in the factory or workplace. The trade union cannot conduct collective bargaining unless it fulfills these conditions. The decision as to whether or not a trade union has indeed met these conditions is based on the registration list and statistics of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, which are themselves much disputed.

The restrictions which have been imposed on the right to strike are the following:

- Strikes are completely banned in services whose maintenance is considered to be essential (the concept of essential services is extended to include petrol, banks insurance and branches of industry like coal mining).

- The government has the authority to postpone strikes when it considers they would present a threat to national security or public health. If the decision to postpone a strike is disputed, the final decision rests with the supreme arbitration council which is under the control of the government and whose decision is binding. Seven of the nine members of the supreme arbitration council represent the government and the employers and thus can take a binding decision even without the participation of the two workers' representatives.

- All those articles of the constitution and relevant laws which do not adequately guarantee the civil rights should be added to these restrictions.

The Turkish trade union movement, opposing these developments, has chosen to struggle on two platforms. Firstly, the international platform. As the most representative workers' organisation in Turkey, Turk-Is has presented the problems to the ILO and ICFTU to both of which it is affiliated. The argument

we are putting forward on this platform is that the claims of the Özal government elected by the 1983 General Elections such as that the process of democratisation is rapidly being completed, do not in the least reflect the reality. An anti-union attitude is an example of this fact. While such efforts continue on this platform, a non-stop nationwide struggle is continuing to change these laws. In this framework massive indoor and outdoor meetings are being organised. The discontent of the workers is being expressed, the attitude of the government is being protested against and a struggle to regain the rights and liberties of the workers is being waged.

Esteemed chairperson,

The struggle we have waged since 1980 taught us this: It will take time to reach the desired aims in this struggle.

This struggle will advance under difficult conditions.

As much as it is ours, it is a joint responsibility of the international trade union movement and its national centres who share the same philosophy and world outlook to ensure that this struggle succeeds.

The Turkish trade union movement and Turk-İs sincerely believe that these seemingly difficult to solve problems can be overcome by collaboration and solidarity constituted on such a framework of understanding.



100,000 workers took part in the İzmir rally of Türk-İş under the slogans of "bread, peace, freedom", 1986.



FORGE MORE LINKS

Jo Richardson MP

f.g.

Can I say how honored I was to be invited by the Great London Association of Trades Councils and I think we all owe them a tribute for having organised this get-together this afternoon.

I apologise for having arrived late. But I came from another meeting and I am afraid I have to attend another meeting after this. That's the story of my life and I think it's also the lives of women who are in politics here in Britain, which are relatively few. We have to split ourselves into so many different parts because of the growing number of, and growing awareness of the problems which women have to face here. Having said that, listening this afternoon and having read myself, over a long period, of the problems which face women in Turkey, although I don't want our problems to become as bad, nevertheless some of the problems we have here pale into insignificance because of the toughness and fascist tendencies of the regime in Turkey.

Jo Richardson is the Member of Parliament for Barking, Labour Party spokesperson for women's affairs and a member of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee.

Mind you, our own government here has fascist tendencies as well. It is not too much of a step, and I say this seriously between the right wing and conservative government under Mrs Thatcher — alas a woman — and fascism, because the kind of policies which she puts forward actually breed the reactionary people in this country and it is something which we have to watch. So although, and I know that Carole has mentioned some of the problems which we face here, we do have problems and in some senses they are paralleled to some degree by the problems which women in Turkey face. I think that we have to some to see where they meet and try to do our best to support each other. And that is why it is so good and helpful that we have an active group of Turkish women in the United Kingdom who do their level best to keep the position of women in Turkey in the forefront of the minds of those who they meet.

I know that Carole mentioned to you (she just told me about it) it is quite difficult for us in the House of Commons for example, to have a debate about violence against women. I'll tell you however, because I am women's rights spokesperson for the Labour Party, we have on the agenda for a debate although I don't know when it will be, a debate on violence against women in Britain. That will not just be violence against British Women but violence against all women who are here of whatever nationality. I am in some senses looking forward to seeing what the reactions from the conservatives will be and in another sense not looking forward to it. Because of the examples we had so far every time we raise in the House of Commons the position of women, there is a certain group of conservative right wingers who do their level best to rubbish the whole position, which is in a sense what the women of Turkey are suffering from. I believe that, as I say, we must try to forge more links between women in Britain and women in Turkey. I have read about the politicization of Turkish women who have been oppressed not only by the government itself, but also by the traditions which there are in Turkey and which they also have to face and fight.

In some senses there is a bit of parallel between them, and let us say the women in the mining communities in Britain, who were for many many years until the miner's strike, completely non-political, who during that struggle became very much more politicized. Only the other day I was fortunate to meet three of the leading figures in the organization of women against pit closures. I was very



happy to find that they were still extremely active not only on behalf of the sacked miners, but also in other fields where they have remained and become more political in the fight against the Thatcher government.

So I say we must try to work together.

I want to make one last political point and then make a couple of practical suggestions. The last political point I want to make is that I just want to reiterate and reinforce the fact that the next Labour Government will repeal the 1971 Immigration Act and 1981 British Nationality Act. This last one will be the first thing to be done. Because the others take longer legislative process to introduce fairer and non-sexist immigration rules. That is something we can in fact do over night; change the rules. Changing the legislation takes a little bit longer because it has to be done in the form of changing the Act of Parliament.

But we are outraged at what has happened to women under Tory Immigration Rules. And we shall see to it that as quickly as possible after the coming in of a Labour Government those rules will be repealed; and a fair set of rules based on uniting the families and based on justice for individuals and certainly on a non-sexist, non-racist basis will be introduced.

Now finally, a couple of practical suggestions: As women's rights spokesperson for the Labour Party I do a Women's Action Bulletin to Women's Sections and Women's Councils within the Labour Party once every 6 or 8 weeks. And it normally consists of news items or briefings. I would be happy to do one about one page. That's what we need, which talks about the problems of Turkish women.

Also to follow that, this is my second suggestion, if you agree, by saying that women's sections and women councils who would like to hear more or perhaps to have a speaker from the Turkish women's movement here in the U.K. could contact the organization in order to see whether that would be a possibility and I think that would be a practical way of drawing the attention of women who may or may not have as directly as Carole and I and others been able to do to the problems which face Turkish women, but who are always interested in what's happening to their sisters in other countries and learn from them and do what they can and to exchange experiences. So if you think that would be a useful suggestion I'll be very very happy to do that but I will need somebody to give me a contact which I can put in my newsletter where women's sections could ring up and make contact to fix dates.

So thank you again for inviting me to come. I have been most interested in, and been very rewarded by the descriptions which have so far been given. This is after all a briefing about women in Turkey and I don't think you want to hear about women in Britain. Some of you live here so you have the same problems that we have as well and our rather oppressive regime. When we do finish this meeting let us finish by hoping the oppression against all peoples, and the oppressions against men and oppressions against women and oppressions against working class people will be ended as soon as possible and it will be, I think if we all unite throughout the world .





WOMEN QUESTIONS

Şükran Ketenci

I. INTRODUCTION

In the under-developed or surpassed countries there are many problems, first of all, the ailing development of the economy and distribution of income in an unjust manner.

People in our country, conditioned to accept decisions made for them by others, where it has been accepted for centuries that the only and unjust, governing system is the central authority, have gradually sunk into the darkness of adopting the idea that our superiors think better than us and are now in danger of loosing their ability to think. It is our opinion that it is one of the key reasons for democracy not being applied or being very frequently interrupted.

Thus, it will not be possible to give definition and meaning to either freedom or equality before increasing, in our society, the number of thinking people.

Taking this assertion as our starting point, we can claim that one of the issues which needs to be given thought and research is the "Women's Question" which

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arises in our country where a patriarchal family structure is dominant, and that it should be observed and examined separately. Evidently, the problem is that of people, of the workers, of family, of children. But over a period of time social and economic changes in the society have put women under such great responsibilities that whichever social problem it is we are dealing with, we will see that the women's question is involved.

Women, who have to carry on their shoulders the burden of cheap labour, being the cornerstone of the family, and taking the responsibilities for the inner family education which determines the future generations, live a life where they have no social security other than of their man, and have not gained personality because of the pressure of traditions and customs.

The fact that health services and family planning do not sufficiently reach women causes thousands of deaths among women during birth or abortion and lack of education causes child deaths to increase rapidly.

The figures definitely prove that educational opportunities for women in our country lag behind those of men.

In our country, just as in other under-developed countries, different standards of judgement for man and woman show their negative effects in the working life of women and their contribution to the economy.

Equality for our women who have always followed man three paces behind is only written in laws and has not shown much progress in application; -perhaps they have achieved the position of lagging only two paces behind instead... Yet if this mass of women forming half of the population, were to be mobilised and enabled to participate equally in production, the process of breaking-up the chain of under-development would be accelerated. Success on this point could be measured by determining accurately the question and bringing realistic approaches for its solution.

Apart from the framework of general policies, the fact that no real solution has been put forward for the women's question up until now, and that it constantly grows bigger, makes it inevitable for it to be one of the main issues of specific policies as well.

Undoubtedly, determining the question accurately requires first of all an examination of the position of women in history. We therefore assume that the most efficient way of dealing with the issue would be an historical approach setting forth how these problems came on the scene in time.

Having said so, we must also keep in mind the importance of how the concept of the women's question was developed by other countries. While new thoughts, comments and statements are being developed and at the same time there is a striving to formulate a new context for the concept of Human Rights, which corresponds to the necessities of our epoch, the concept of "equality of man and woman" has reached a valid global application.

Especially, institutions of the United Nations such as UNESCO, ILO, FAO and WHO have determined what sort of work is necessary in this field and also have tried to clarify what type of organisations should be set up among the

public in order to solve the women's question. In this respect, in the last few years it has been the main object to set up "National Mechanisms" i.e., to link the women's question in each country having its own public administration to that of authorised offices.

Although the changes in the laws are being mentioned, the approach to the women's question is the world generally is based on the position women's labour holds in the economic system. Within the framework of this new conception the reasons are being examined why the social position of women gets stuck at the first stages of economic and social development.

The main point of our subject will be to examine the women's question, in our country, in regards to which social changes it has undergone to form the roots of the problem as it is today.

II. AN HISTORICAL VIEW OF WOMAN'S SOCIAL STATUS

In our country, the status of woman in the social structure has undergone changes during certain periods, such as the Ottoman social structure of the pre-Tanzimat (the political reforms made in the Ottoman State in 1839) period, of "westernizing" starting from Tanzimat and ending towards the end of the First-World War, the initial years of the Republic and the single party years, and finally the "rapid social changes" period we have been living through since the 1950's.

In the pre-Tanzimat Ottoman social structure based on close, self-sufficient small family production, the status of woman was determined within the framework of Islamic Laws. She was not considered as man's equal as a human being. In the rural areas, among the self-sufficient peasant families, woman was working both in the fields and also was in charge of transforming the product to a stage where it could be consumed. In the cities where woman was not taking any part in production, she was living with the family, entirely isolated from social life.

In the Ottoman society, woman, in brief, was the slave of the State, religion and family.

Westernization which started with Tanzimat started also affecting the status of woman. Legal changes were brought by the Land Act 1858 which provided equal rights of inheritance for girls and boys.

The changes which started with Tanzimat had not effected the position of great numbers of women, but with the *first steps* it allowed, perhaps it served as a preparatory base and had more significance than the changes which took place in the following periods.

It was a period which lacked the fundamental basis to enable woman to work and financially become independent from the family, a period which liberated

woman from the Harem (women's quarters in the Sultan's Palace) but again not giving her independence from the family. The Ottoman intellectual had a tendency to give more education to woman, but the aim of this education was only to improve the role of woman in the family, i.e., to educate and train children more efficiently. In other words the aim was not to improve the productive personality of woman.

The changes in Turkey which made woman's daily life topsy-turvy came with the war years. The entrance of woman in paid jobs as workers and clerks was a result of the necessity to subsist while their husbands were in the army. The entrance of woman into politics came during the occupation and National Struggle years following the First World War.

After the war women returned to their homes and roles without any objections.

They were the long-suffering years, when millions of women, at time of a very high rate of child deaths, gave birth to many children one after another, at the risk of their own lives and strove to feed and protect them relying on the support of their daughters. Despite all the burdens this woman/mother was carrying she was practically deprived of every right, in addition she would get beaten-up whenever she attempted to raise her voice against the traditional relations.

However, in those years, in addition to the changes in the centre in terms of the state-the founding of the republic, perhaps the most radical "women's revolution" in the Islamic Mediterranean societies was being carried out.

The "almost" equality and right to elect and be elected brought by the Civil Code was tantamount to acceptance of woman into citizenship.

Only a limited number of women were in a position to benefit from these changes. In the period of the Republic, educated, professional, working women who in addition acted as supporters for their husbands and served as good mothers, i.e., "ideal-elite" women were treated with great respect and honor. Yet, these women, in the years of reforms, were enjoying the excitement of being elite innovators so ambitiously, they were unable to see either the tragic side of their own lives or the real truth for the women of Turkey.

In the post-Second World War years the rapid change in the country's economy, due to integration in the world capitalist system caused important changes in the social structure. This state can briefly be summarised as agricultural modernisation in rural areas, initial disintegration of small family enterprises, the liberation of rural labour from land, migration to cities, urbanisation, modernisation of trade and industry and finally rapid social changes. All these changes directly and indirectly have affected the position of women both in the family and society.

In the rural parts women were either maintaining their positions as family workers or otherwise breaking entirely away from production and taking the status of housewife. During that period, there was a considerable fall in the number of women participating in the labour force.

In the cities, however, there are two stratas whose relations in regard to society, work and family seem at the first glance very different from each other. First the urban working class women (in some surveys these women are described as gecekondü (shanty town) women) and secondly urban middle class women.

There are very few among the shanty-town women who work in the factories. For those working, among this group, almost the only way to earn their living is working as "maidservants".

Those who manage to free themselves from the classical role of housekeeping are the ones who can find vacancies in some industries relatively employing more women such as weaving, food and textiles

The second group are the middle class working women who can find employment in the service sector as secretaries, teachers, and in banking.

Again another group is self-employed women such as lawyers and doctors whose number is higher than of those in western countries.

III. THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN OUR SOCIETY TODAY

1) State of Education:

One of the fundamental indicators relevant to the social position of women is their level of education. It is undeniable, despite the fact that in the period of the Republic educational opportunities were expanded and a great increase was achieved in the number of the educated, they have not yet reached the desired level.

In the first census of the republic (1927) it was established that only 11% of the total population and 4.5% of women were literate. According to the 1980 census it was established that 46.6% of women over the age of 6 were illiterate, while this percentage drops to 16.8% for men. The inequality which can be discerned in the levels of literacy in elementary schooling can be seen throughout all levels of education.

It is proved by the fact that for female students, opportunities and possibilities to continue school after elementary education are much more limited than those for boys.

While the number of males in higher education is 545,490 (77%), the figure is 162,514 (23%) for females.

Just by looking at these facts it can easily be stated that the principle of "equality in education" is not being applied starting from the lowest to highest levels.

If an evaluation is made according to the data of the 1980 census, it can be

seen that 47.1% of the female population over 6 have graduated from school. However, the percentage for males is 72.9%. A survey related to those who have graduated from school shows that 78.5% of females who have done so, graduated from elementary schools. For males this figure is 52.7%. The percentage of girls who are, or have been to secondary (junior) schools is 9.7%, while the figure is 12.2% for boys. The percentages of those who have graduated from high (senior) school are 9.6% for girls and 10.9% for boys.

An examination of the data relating to higher education gives some hints as to the position of women. The educational level where sexism is applied most in addition to class discrimination is higher education.

Those who have the opportunity to acquire education in the universities in order of importance are: Urban males, rural males, urban females, rural females.

Despite the fact that female students are represented in limited numbers in higher education, they are concentrated in certain branches such as educational and social sciences. Apart from that, the percentage of female students in proportion to the total number of students is 42.8% in the fine arts, 35.7% in Medical Sciences, 29.7% in Educational Sciences and 35.3% in the Natural Sciences. These are the branches where they are represented in a larger percentage compared with their general representation in higher education. However, in Law (18.3%), Engineering (16.3%), Agriculture (18.5%) they are represented by a lower percentage.

If we were to make a general evaluation of women's education in Turkish society, it could be argued that inequality applies to all levels of education starting from literacy and the higher the level of education the smaller becomes the number of who can benefit from educational opportunities. What is more, even for the happy few who can reach the highest levels of education, the principle of equal educational opportunities does not apply with regard to choice of branch of learning.



2. Working Conditions

A) In General

The participation of women in social production, i.e., the level and degree of participation in economic life is considered to be one of the fundamental indicators.

According to the 1980 census, women in Turkey constitute 48.4% of the population. A high death rate among women during birth is the reason for the lower percentage of women in the total population.

While the number of women working in agriculture is 5,431,451 the number for men is 5,051,405. These figures show the percentage of women participating in agricultural production is higher than that of men.

In industry while the number of working women is 299,131, the number of men is 2,772,600. It is clear that the male labour force is utilised much more than that of women.

The total number of women in the entire production and service sector is 6,412,785, while the total number of men is 12,614,100.

It can therefore be claimed that the proportion of women taking part in production is lagging way behind their percentage in the total population.

The distribution of the non-producing population of women is as follows: 1.3% pensioners, 11.6% students, 81.8% housewives. It can be claimed that the main occupation for women in Turkey is serving as housewives if it is considered that only 43.1% of women able to work are economically active.

When we evaluate the data it can be stated that the proportion of Turkish women taking part in production is low. The main occupation of women is to serve as housewives and the majority of the productive forces of women are used in agriculture.

B. Problems of Women Working In Various Sectors

It is not possible to summarise the problems of women from various sections of society under a general heading. In addition to common problems of women from different sections they also have specific problems arising from their concrete conditions. Determining these different problems and conditions constitutes the basis on which to offer realistic solutions. It will be useful to establish the facts first within the framework of economic activity.

****Women in the Agricultural Sector**

While one of the concrete indicators of women's social position is economic activity and from, the other is the level of education, the educational position of economically active women in the agricultural sector in Turkey has typical characteristics. 61.5% of women working in the agricultural section are illiterate while of the rest, 4.5% can read and write, and only 33.1% are elementary school graduates. 97.5% of illiterate women in Turkey work in the agricultural section.



The second characteristic relevant to women in agriculture is the unpaid family worker. 92.5% of women in agriculture are unpaid family workers. Although with the new legal arrangements the workers in this sector have been included in social security, it could be argued, especially for women, to what extent it will be applied in practice.

In brief, the preponderance of female labour power is used in agriculture and they form a group which has no education, no social security and no wages.

****Women in the Industrial Sector**

In the Industrial sector also, the working conditions of women have some particular characteristics. In this sector where women are represented in very low numbers there is a division of spheres of work into feminine and masculine.

Tobacco (53.1%) and weaving (46.8%) are spheres where women are working in large numbers whereas in mines, metal and construction industry women are represented by only 1%.

When we look at the educational position of women working in the industrial sector we will see that 27.4% of them are illiterate, 58.1% of them are elementary school graduates, and only 5.6% of them went through secondary education.

Although they have higher levels of education when compared to the educational level of women in general, those who are employed as workers have mainly elementary education only.



Another characteristic relevant to women workers industry in that approximately one fifth of them work as unpaid workers (18.2%). What is more they are still the cheap labour power in the industrial sector. Even in the collective bargaining agreements women and men workers who do exactly the same work can still get different wage rates.

Also most of the women working in this sector are working without any insurance. For instance, only 38.8% of the women are insured of those who should actually be covered by insurance. It is also a known fact that the percentage of unionised women is very low and that they are the first ones to be sacked in a time of crisis. The most detailed regulations written referring to women's working conditions are written in the Labour Laws. But on the other hand there are no adequate regulations relevant to maternity leave or child care. Especially because of insufficient control and sanctions, it is possible not to comply with the regulations. Women in employment in Turkey, just as in other capitalist countries, are gradually shifting towards the service sector. While the percentage of women working in the service sector was 1.6% in 1955, this rose to 7.4% in 1980.

****Women in the Service Sector**

Women in the service sector, when compared to the ones in other sectors, appear to be the group which has benefited most from educational opportunities. 20.7% have benefited from higher education, 46% high schools or training schools, 11.2% primary education. 79.3% of women with higher education of those employed, work in the service sector.

It can be said that women working in the public sector, from cities and families with middle class origins have benefited most from the legal possibilities provided in the time of the Republic. 65.1% of women working in the public sector went through either higher or university education and their average level of education is higher than that of men working in the public sector.

Women in the Turkish public administration are employed in the respectable professions such as law, medicine and engineering in much higher proportions than of those in advanced capitalist countries.

Another characteristic relevant to women in the public sector is their constant increase in numbers, and that most of them work in the educational field, health services and office jobs. However it can be deduced by looking at 1980 figures that there was a fall in the number of working women in the educational field and men were given priority in getting employment in this field. Such a tendency was due to the social chaos of the years following 1978 and also the striving of the Party political governments to install partisan cadres especially in the MEB (National Educational Ministry). A personnel policy aimed at creating partisan cadres caused women to lose their position in the educational field which was one of the main "feminine" working fields. This fact stands as an interesting indication relevant to the status of women's working life.

One of the chief problems of women working in the public sector is that they have inadequate maternity leave, while others are lack of creches, nurseries and early retirement.

If we consider the information given above it is possible to state that women in this category are facing better conditions than the others.

3. Health Conditions

Health can not be defined as just not being ill or disabled. Therefore, only to consider women's health in these limits would cause some important issues to be skipped. For instance excessive child bearing and miscarriages due to this as well as malnutrition are important social health problems. Thus it is important that the issue must be observed from the perspective of those conditions necessary to provide for the well being of women physically, spiritually and socially.

a. Health Problems

The information on sicknesses of women of child bearing age is inadequate in Turkish society. Researchers have calculated that 30% of women have an abortion at least once. The average number of abortions per women is one. One of the points which attracts most attention is that the number of women who intentionally have miscarriages once or more is continually increasing. While the number was 7.6% in 1968 it rose to 13.94 in 1975.

Because of the unreliability of the statistics in our country, only assumptions can be found regarding this issue. For instance it is assumed that half a million abortions take place every year and 20-25 out of every 100 deaths occur as a result of miscarriage or abortion.

The worst killer of Turkish women is the illegal birth prevention methods applied by uneducated operating hands. Yet researches prove that the women are willing to learn the proper methods. While in our country, the average number of children per family in the agricultural areas is 6.12 in İstanbul it is 2.65. This is a sign which indicates the lack of balance in allocating birth control services. To use birth control gadgets is directly connected to the level and conditions of education. Miscarriage and abortion is directly in proportion to the level of urbanization and education.

Deaths caused by miscarriage or abortion in western countries are far lower than those in the newly-developing countries.

The inadequacy of the facilities provided for Turkish women for birth control is very obvious. Our country reflects the typical image of an under-developed country as regards this issue.

b. The Nourishment Problem

Although an inadequate and unbalanced diet is a fundamental and crucial problem in our country it is emphasised even more by the fact that it is one of the chief reasons for high death rates among women and children.

Women and children are the group which is affected most by this problem. While the rate of baby deaths is 10-20 out of 1000 in developed countries this rate is 120-160 out of 1000 in the newly-developing countries. Malnutrition is the primary reason for 7% of child deaths and a secondary reason for 46%.

Women are distinguished from men by their ability to bear children. While it is possible for man only to produce commodities, woman can produce both commodities and human beings. In order for the baby to develop during pregnancy and to grow up with the mother's milk after birth, the mother needs vitamins and minerals. This gives special importance to the mother's diet. It affects the health of both the mother and the baby in a negative way if the required nourishment is not met during pregnancy and breast-feeding. One of the chief consequences of malnutrition among Turkish women is anemia caused by lack of iron. While very few men suffer from this type of anemia, approximately 50% of children, pregnant and breast-feeding women suffer from it.



4. Women in Political Life

It is a known fact that the participation of women in social and political life is very low being caused by their level of education and inequality in working life. The lowness of participation in the political life is a fact in other countries as well. Inequality is observed even in the voting process which is by now considered to be the simplest step in political activity and conduct. We can still talk about dependent and controlled voting for a great proportion of women. The inequality which starts with interest in politics and the voting process grows even greater at the higher levels of political activity.

It is known that politically active women have far more superlative qualities than the general mass of women.

The common characteristic of the women who served as members of parliament between 1935-1977 was that all of them were exceedingly well educated. Their educational level was even higher than that of the male members of the parliament.

In brief, we can say that women are not using to the same extent as men the legal opportunities provided by the laws in three fields (employment, education, and political life.)



SUGGESTIONS

A very general evaluation of the women's question in Turkey using political data and researches, brings to light the different problems of women in different categories.

The chief problems for the unpaid woman family worker in the agricultural sector are education, wages, insurance and unionisation. Among all the woman in today's society, women of the rural sector are the ones who pay the highest price for being women.

For women working in industry, again education, insurance, equal pay for equal work and safety conditions in the working place still constitute problems.

Women working in the public sector constitute a more privileged group. Yet women in this group still face problems such as the conflict between their working and home lives and inequality in getting promoted.

Apart from the working women we should also consider women not directly involved in production or who do not take part in the productive labour force

but who number about seven million. Although it has now been made possible for them to be included in Bagkur, (a Social Security scheme for mainly self-employed traders, shop keepers etc.), the questions such as to what extent will it be applicable in practice and to what extent will it be useful regarding to the social attributes of women still remain. It is a very common opinion that the best way to help this group is by creating the opportunities for them to develop their potential by participating directly in production.

What could be done in solving the women question apart from, and in addition to the framework of the general programmes on the issues of EDUCATION-WORKING LIFE-HEALTH?

EDUCATION

One of the chief problems to be solved in Turkey is to provide everyone with basic educational opportunity. A point which must be insisted upon is that the women in the rural areas should complete at least primary education. The attendance of the girls in the rural areas must be ensured by strict control. Because the educational level would be poor for the adults who attended school only for a certain period, the content should be extended.

One way of taking measures against this situation is to remove examples from schoolbooks which reinforce the traditional roles of men and women and present women as home-dependent.

To provide girls society-wide with more advanced levels of education should be encouraged. Equal opportunity in education for girls can only be provided when it is generally accepted that it is a natural way of living for girls also to work outside the home. In order to put this in to practice it is necessary to create a new image of woman (a productive woman image) by using educational channels and the mass media.

WORKING LIFE

Considering that working in itself improves the personality of all people, the conditions and opportunities for women to work should be improved. In addition to that women should receive information on the issues of unionization, being organized on a cooperative basis and production and /or they should receive encouraging education on these issues. It should be through education that women reach a consciousness that enables them to wage struggle to get compensation for their labour.

It is a must that women be liberated from the primitive working conditions in the agricultural sector. Necessary control mechanisms should be set up in order for women, who are productive and deprived of all the rights, in the agricultural sector to be unionized, insured and paid properly. Cooperatives should be set up to utilize the labour products of women in the agricultural sector where work is a secondary occupation. Women should also benefit from the new Agricultural Insurance Act.

It is necessary for the women working in the industrial sector to get equal pay, to organize in the unions and to be insured. A great number of young girls and

women (nearly 300,000) work in the clothing industry illegally and without any insurance.

The contribution of women working generally on a seasonal basis and under very straining conditions is crucial in the ready-made clothes for export industry. The importance of unionization for these women is obvious. Therefore there should be a drive to get them into the unions. Maternity leave for working women is inadequate, it should be extended.

The laws relevant to establishing creches and nurseries in work places should be put into effect, supervised and applied in practice. When necessary the state and the councils should, as in other countries, provide grants for creches.

Necessary arrangements should be made for women who work as housemaids to be covered by insurance.

HEALTH

The rate of deaths among mothers is an indicator which reflects best the states of health of mothers. Although the precise figure is not known for the rate of deaths caused by miscarriage or the rate of miscarriages, it is known that out of three births one is a miscarriage. In our country, 6.3% of deaths among women are mothers' deaths. The lowness of this rate in the developed countries gives a clue about the inadequacy of measures against such deaths in our country.

To raise the level and state of mothers' health is directly connected with spreading countrywide, effective, family planning which is connected with the adequacy of health service personnel's knowledge and ability.

-Necessary food benefit provided by the state for the pregnant and breast-feeding mother should take a privileged place among social benefits.

-In order for the Abortion Act to be applied on a larger scale, the Act should be introduced comprehensively and the number of the official treatment institutions which are equipped to provide better hygienic conditions should be increased.

-“Birth control methods” should be developed especially for the poor citizens and people of shanty town areas to benefit either with or without a very low fee, and also to give out the necessary information in order for such a method of work.

-The number of birth clinics and beds should be increased.

-Even if the delivery of the baby takes place at home, the assistance of health personnel should be provided. In case of any problems arising expert doctors or institutions should be nearby.

-The number of midwives should be increased.

-The number of health centres should be increased and they should be equipped with the necessary equipment and knowledgeable health personnel.

-Measures should be taken to provide control and check-ups frequently and treatment when necessary for married women of child-bearing age by health personnel. For the women of child-bearing age periodical check-ups to

recognize any potential health problems beforehand should be provided.

-Continuous education on issues such as general health, pregnancy, abortion and pre and post pregnancy health conditions should be provided for young girls and women.

CONCLUSION

In order for the suggestions relevant to solving women's problems to be implemented some changes in the articles of Law are necessary. Also considering that, without any control mechanisms being established to provide the legal arrangements, women will not benefit from any sort of Act. Stable and working supervisory mechanisms should be put into effect, i.e., supportive control and encouragement will be needed in order for the legal framework to have a meaningful content,

It is wrong to accept the women's question as a question concerning only women, it is a question concerning the whole society. Men should be equally responsible and occupied in solving the problems. Otherwise it is tantamount to accepting that their daughters live under the same conditions.

21,670,198 of the total population in Turkey (44,736,957) are women and 23,066,759 men. The productivity level of men and women who are consumers in the society is very important.

According to ILO's publications the total labour force in our country is 19,026,885, and 12,612,100 of this is the male labour force while 6,412,785 of is female. The fact that the female labour force among the total labour force is 29.6% proves undoubtedly the significance of women's contribution to the economic development of the country.

The thing which should be emphasised at this point is that the women who participated in production and were equal, lost their position in the society after their relation with social production was interrupted and social disintegration was on the agenda. Although in various degrees, this social disintegration shows itself very intensely in our country.

Researches show that as well as differences regarding the women's question among developed and under-developed countries, there are also differences to be observed between the capitalist and socialist countries on this issue. In a comparison between the capitalist and socialist countries on this issue, some fundamental differences are established, yet it is observed that in the socialist countries some advanced steps have been taken towards the participation of women in social production and in the education of women.

Some characteristics of the waged labour of women observed in our country are similar to those in all the other countries where capitalist relations are dominant in production. Women, for instance, are employed generally in part-time jobs with low wages, where no talent is required and which are less satisfying, where the chance of promotion is very low. The risk of getting sacked is very high and women are usually the ones to get sacked first during a period of

crisis.

The motivations behind the fact that the waged women's labour force is always secondary in the labour market should be highlighted. It is very important to find ways to attract women's potential, i.e., the reserve labour force into the economy without affecting the private lives of women, men and children. It is possible, for instance, to attract this potential to the labour market by rearranging the working conditions for women by conducting social policies that make work easier.

The greatest obstacle in Turkey in solving the women's question is distorted capitalism. The fact firstly that the country has a heavily agricultural economy which still has not integrated with the market; secondly, the problem of the labour production unit formed by the unwaged women family workers which still exists, and thirdly the backward structure in the cities which cannot provide job opportunities for women cause, to a great extent, the women's question to stay on the agenda for years.

The existence of the administrative structure is a must if equality of the sexes is to be established in all the sections of social life. The solutions of women's problems is possible only with the existence of a couple or more administrative units equipped with certain responsibilities and authority.

An administrative body established relevant to women's problems should, apart from informing women on educational and other opportunities, from time to time investigate and evaluate the social position of women and coordinate measures against discrimination and make suggestions to the government.

In our country not only the constitution but all the laws have aims such as to constitute equality of the sexes. It is a cordial wish we share to see the establishment of a national mechanism in order to conduct easier constructive policies characterized by better working conditions for working women outside the home of which the great majority are unwaged women working in the agricultural sector. It will also be necessary for the future public institutions to wage a struggle against conservative ideas. To form public opinion in support will be one of their major tasks.

The failure to overcome the economic difficulties we are going through, the suspension of democracy for long years, have affected negatively the seeking for solutions to the women's question along with other social ideas.

It could be stated that, in addition to the economic structure, the state plays a great role in determining the limits of participation of women in the economy.

The significance of the issue lies in the fact the rights given to women by the laws have not adequately reached women in all categories and levels.



FIGHT FOR A SOCIETY WITHOUT EXPLOITATION

Ayşe Hasan

This conference has been a great success in many respects. First of all this conference has established a genuine link between the women in Turkey and abroad. Secondly the conference has been very informative about the situation of women in Turkey, Ms. Akdoğan and Ms. Ketenci brought an authentic voice from women of Turkey.

Therefore I would like to thank the Greater London Association of Trades Councils and in particular Comrade Peter Spalding for their contribution to the success of this conference. We have been a witness of their true internationalist spirit and support for many years. Through this conference we believe their supportive work will gain more momentum.

I would like to thank the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey, for their vast and successful activities. The CDDRT has always been able to rightly assess the necessary tasks in accordance with the situation of Turkey and then actively pursue them in the most effective ways in order to fulfill

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these tasks.

Today the CDDRT is one of the very few solidarity organisations across Europe which has been able to correctly assess the situation of Turkey and to bring correct information and necessary activities into the agenda of the European working class movement.

As the CDDRT rightly points out the burning issue of Turkey is the fight for genuine democracy in Turkey. One of the most important criteria of democracy is women's rights and the role of women within the socio-political life of a country. In this respect it is very informative to go through Turkey's record on women rights and the situation of women in Turkey.

As we heard from the distinguished speakers from Turkey the women of Turkey have been subjected to severe oppression. They have very limited chances to organise and fight against this oppression, as Ms. Akdoğan pointed out, the trade union rights and civil rights have been curtailed.

In addition to this, if we consider the very low level of wages and the incomes of the working class as a whole, the unequal pay of women, and if we consider the extent of unemployment we can rightly assess how large the discontent of women in Turkey is.

We must also take another important aspect of the problem of women in Turkey into consideration, which was not covered by the speakers from Turkey. That is the situation of the Kurdish women who do not even have the right to teach their own mother tongue to their own children. If the Turkish women have been subjected to double exploitation, the Kurdish women suffer a triple exploitation and national oppression, in addition to oppression as women.

With the women under such conditions can we even attempt to mention a democracy in Turkey? The answer to this question is no. If we are talking about a genuine democracy, which must aim to improve the living and working conditions of the working people. Then the burning desire of the working people to improve their working and living conditions and the desire of the millions of Turkish and Kurdish women to get equality, unifies and focuses on the problem of democracy in Turkey. The recent developments in the trade union sphere and many spontaneous demonstrations of women has shown that the working class women and the working class as a whole raise the question of content and the extent of the democracy. The fight for rights and freedoms will be an ever increasing struggle dominating the political and social scene in the near future.

What will be the issues in this struggle? One of the focal points will be trade unions for these rights are strongly linked with the health, life and future of the working class of today.

Today there is a great gap between the wages and the values of the labour force. Even the official minimum wage rate is far lower than the value of the unskilled labour force. Moreover, the official minimum wage rate does not cover a large section of the workers. Therefore the official minimum wage rate will be an important point in the struggle's agenda.

The working conditions are as terrible as the wages. Turkey is among the

countries with the greatest record of work-accidents. Social security does not cover all the workers. Even those who are entitled to social security are not employed accordingly. There has been no unemployment insurance. Workers participation in the management of the social security system is not satisfactory.

Most important of all is that the workers organisations have been severely oppressed. Ms. Akdoğan has provided a summary of this oppression. Today the workers are pursuing the leadership of the trade unions in order to raise their demands for the changing of the legal system, which curtails their rights and in order to fight these issues more vigorously.

Therefore in order to pursue their basic economic demands, the working class of Turkey will pass through a severe political struggle. To support this struggle through our solidarity work will be the main task for us in the near future.

If this is the situation and struggle of the workers as a whole, what will be the main issue of the women?

The lack of civil liberties, oppression of the free initiative and formation of women organisations and severe restrictions on the right to demonstrate and protest against the existing legal framework which has been established by the junta will define the lines of struggle.

Today even the political parties are not allowed to form women's sections. This is the result of their fear which stems from the struggle women gave during the seventies. However, these restrictions as all the other restrictions, are no longer working.

In practice and in many instances women have already broken these restrictions into pieces. In the near future the women's movement will place a great importance on the issue of getting the right to organise.

The women's movement also works hard on other civil liberties. As we heard from Ms. Ketenci some important rights exist within the letter of the laws. In practice these rights either do not exist or there are other provisions in law which restricts these rights to nothing. The discrimination against women is built-into many parts of the law.

Some of these are basic elementary rights of an equal citizen. For example, the married woman in Turkey cannot work if she cannot get permission from her husband. The divorce proceeding which was originally designed to secure the women against the injustices of the Islamic law, does allow women to freely practice this right. Sexual relations outside of marriage are a criminal offence for women only. The law also discriminates against illegitimate children. Today there is a rising consciousness of women about these issues. This reflects itself in the discussions that take place in the parliament.

Women as workers face the challenge of unequal pay. In furtherance of this issue women workers are increasingly joining unions and pressing the union leadership to act.

Kurdish women are taking an active part in the struggle to achieve the right to self-determination of the Kurdish people. The Kurdish people are the oppressed

section within the Turkish state. This struggle is gaining support from the other sections of the women's movement.

All these points will form the agenda of women in their struggle. We as immigrant women will do our utmost to assist them. Whilst we are engaged in the fight for solutions to the problems which result from being immigrants in an advanced capitalist society we shall continue to give our solid support.

Today the most important issue of immigrant women in Britain is their immigration status. The main bulk of the Turkish and Cypriot workers living and working in Britain are so-called "illegal" immigrants. This status leaves them without any rights that are in existence for the British working class. Therefore even before talking about equality the Turkish and Cypriot working women are in a struggle for basic rights.

This major obstacle prevents the women from enjoying health and national insurance rights. The right of education and the right to live in proper housing and all other simple rights are non-existent for immigrant women.

This burning issue has drawn many immigrant men and women into the anti-deportation campaigns, which in essence are a major political in Britain. To win this fight immigrant workers and women need the support of large sections of the British labour force and the Trade Union movement. To win this support is in itself a major struggle and we expect the assistance of our friends in the Trade Union movement

On the other hand, the legal workers and women in Britain have also suffered a great deal of discrimination. These problems, which emerge from the social and cultural differences also require a serious struggle. Immigrant women in particular are victims of this discrimination. They are increasingly taking part in this fight, which is interconnected with the struggle to obtain genuine democracy for Britain. Our British comrades have witnessed our commitment to their fight.

Dear friends,

We are entering a period of intensive struggle in Turkey and in Britain. Both struggles are relevant for the women. Most important of all, women cannot be free unless society is free. The freedom of society, on the other hand cannot be achieved without the active participation of women. Therefore we must see this challenge and fight for a society without exploitation and oppression.



MIGRANT TURKISH WOMEN IN BRITAIN

Tijen Uguris

Under capitalism migration is a progressive tendency in general. But objectively it has both positive and negative results. It helps to blur national differences and boundaries and in the long-term breaks down prejudices. On the other hand because of competition among workers for jobs, antagonism towards migrant and foreign workers is born.

These migrant and foreign workers both with regular and irregular immigration status are tolerated during economic growth. However they are the first to be victimised and expelled when there is a recession.

The Turkish and Cyprus communities in Britain as a whole face many problems such as employment education, housing and health. Some of these problems affect women more seriously such as health. Within the solution to these problems the immigration question is the key issue. The first step in solving these problems often is by firstly solving the immigration problem. The question of immigration status leaves people open to unprecedented exploitation. Women face double oppression by being a woman and a worker. Turkish

Tijen Uguris is one of the Union of Turkish Women in Britain and member of the General Council of the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey.

Cypriot women are mainly employed in clothing industry: although they do exactly the same kind of work as men the pay is far lower. In the case of unauthorised workers in Britain due to their status they are exploited to an even greater extent, leaving them with no option but to work for lower wages, compulsory overtime for if they refuse to do the overtime they are sacked. During the winter period factories close down for long periods, often 8 weeks or more. The workers are made redundant because many companies avoid their employment responsibilities by going into voluntary liquidation. Being unable to claim unemployment benefit as National Insurance contribution have not been paid by the employers. Holiday and sick pay are usually not paid either.

The places where Turkish women work are often in appalling conditions 99% of the health and safety regulations are not complied with. For example, there are no canteen facilities, food is often heated on the boilers and eaten on the dirty, dusty machines. The same dirt and dust is inhaled by the workers as no proper ventilation is provided, and cleaning is not done. Also there is usually one toilet for the whole factory to be used by all workers male and female despite the regulation being one toilet to 25 people.

Many Turkish women turn to working at home because of the lack of proper childcare facilities. The homeworkers are under more intense exploitation due to the fact that the delivery mans wages are deducted from their earnings. The homeworkers work for long hours in isolation. The employers take advantage of their position, for isolation results in being unable to organise and get support, for example the homeworker cannot demand a higher price as she is unaware of what other homeworkers are getting. If such a complaint arises, the employers will reply; you are the only one complaining, when the probability is that everyone is complaining. As a result of working long hours — plus the pressure of the house work and children to cope with at the same time — homeworkers, more than other women tend to develop such serious illness as nervous breakdowns, serious backaches and bad eyesight. These women are trapped at home more so than other women, unable to go out in case they miss a delivery; for if a delivery is missed it is uncertain when another one will be made. Homeworkers are afraid of the fact that they are working at home, believing it to be illegal. However, this is not so, neither are they tax avoiders as it is highly unlikely they earn enough to reach to taxable threshold.

Mothers with young children who still work at the factory because of the slightly better pay than doing homework, are in a dilemma about what to do with their children. There are no proper childcare facilities. Thus the mother is forced to take her child to an untrained childminder. This often results in serious problems for both the mother and child; for example, if the child minder is just English speaking then the child learns only English and cannot communicate with the mother in her mother tongue, if the childminder only speaks Turkish then the child only learns Turkish which means that when the child goes to school he/she is at a disadvantage compared with the English-speaking children and thus as often is the case, becomes an under-achiever. As well as this, there is a

breakdown in communication with classmates which results in hostility towards the child by the rest.

To solve this problem, the Union of Turkish Women in Britain has opened a Women's Information Centre providing advice and interpretation services and an under fives bilingual Nursery for 20 children.

As well as facing these problems and being under such exploitation, further more, many more Turkish migrant women workers are under constant threat of deportation and harrasment from both the police and the immigration officers. During the 'Women's Decade' the statistics of deportaions gave a clear indication on how the deportations of migrants and refugees — in particular women — became worse. As Ken Livingstone, before the abolition of the GLC pointed out, Home Office statistics show the increase of deportations between 1974 and 1984. The total of deportations in 1973 was 465, in 1981 there were 3,195, in 1982 a decrease to 1,986 and they then increased again in 1983 to 2,243, in the first quarter of 1984 there were 462 deportation orders, 3 less than the total of 1973. Not all were enforced but many other people are forced out by other means under threat of deportation, harrassed by the police and immigration office, housing from a council housing department, to marry at a registry accomodation when their immigration status is in doubt. There are a far larger number of people who leave "voluntarily" and so do not figure in statistics. (*ref:GLC report number 1 by Leader of Council 9th July 1984*).

The immigration act 1971 gave the police new powers to search for, and arrest, illegal entrants and over-stayers, which resulted in regular raids on homes and work places. Thus one can imagine how these possible raids add fear to the conditions they work under. There are other types of internal immigration control methods which are added to the rest of the problems faced. Other officials of the state are forced to play the role of immigration officer as well. A black person or one with a foreign name applying for welfare benefits at a DHSS office, housing from a council housing department, to marry at a regisytrar office, seeking health treatment at a hospital can all expect to have to prove their immigration status and possibly be reported to the home office.

The sexist immigration legislation denies the independent status for women; this has lead to married women being deported with their husbands, and the increase of the number of deportees. Women are forced to leave the country with their husbands even in cases where the relationship has broken and the woman is in danger of violence. Children who are British citizens are expected to go with their parents, thus in actual fact British citizens are also being deported.

The foreign husband rule forces women to live apart from the husbands of their choice even in situations where a British woman has the right by law, the rules burdening the man to prove that the marriage was not primarily to obtain admission to the U.K.

The following are the demands the Union of Turkish Women in Britain are fighting for:

- The right to bring children, husband and fiances, parents, grandparents and all other dependents to Britain.

- The right to British Nationality for any child born in Britain.

- The right to independent immigration status and not tied to the husbands.

- An end to all deportations.

- All "unauthorised" migrants and their families to be granted either work permits or settlement rights according to their circumstances and situation.

- Automatic right settlement for any migrant and refugee who has lived in Britain for over 3 years.

- Reform of the work permit system in favour of the worker. The work permit must always lead to settlement.

- The right of full time students to part time and/or holiday employment.

- The right to elect and be elected.

- Access to social security for all, regardless of our legal status.

- stop to all internal immigration controls and passport checks by the Department of Health & Social Security, National Health Service, and Social Services Departments, Police, Schools, Colleges, Housing Offices and other agencies.

We raised these demands at the U.N. Women's Decade Conference in Nairobi.

The UTWB works to unite all Turkish and Cypriot women to struggle for their democratic rights themselves.

We have established a very wide and strong relationship and gained the confidence of the Turkish community over the years. We also strongly support the struggle of the working class of Turkey for democracy. We believe that if we are united and fight for our demands, a bright future awaits us.



FURTHER ACTION

The organisers of the conference believe that to assist the development of the struggle for women's rights and trade union freedom in Turkey several practical steps can be taken:

— If you are a member of a trade union or women's organisation, get it to establish contact with a parallel organisation in Turkey.

— Invite women in Turkey to exchange visits and delegations with your organisation.

For further information or assistance contact the organisers at the address below.

BRIEFING CONFERENCE OF WOMEN IN TURKEY
c/o 129 Newington Green Road, London N1 4RD.