



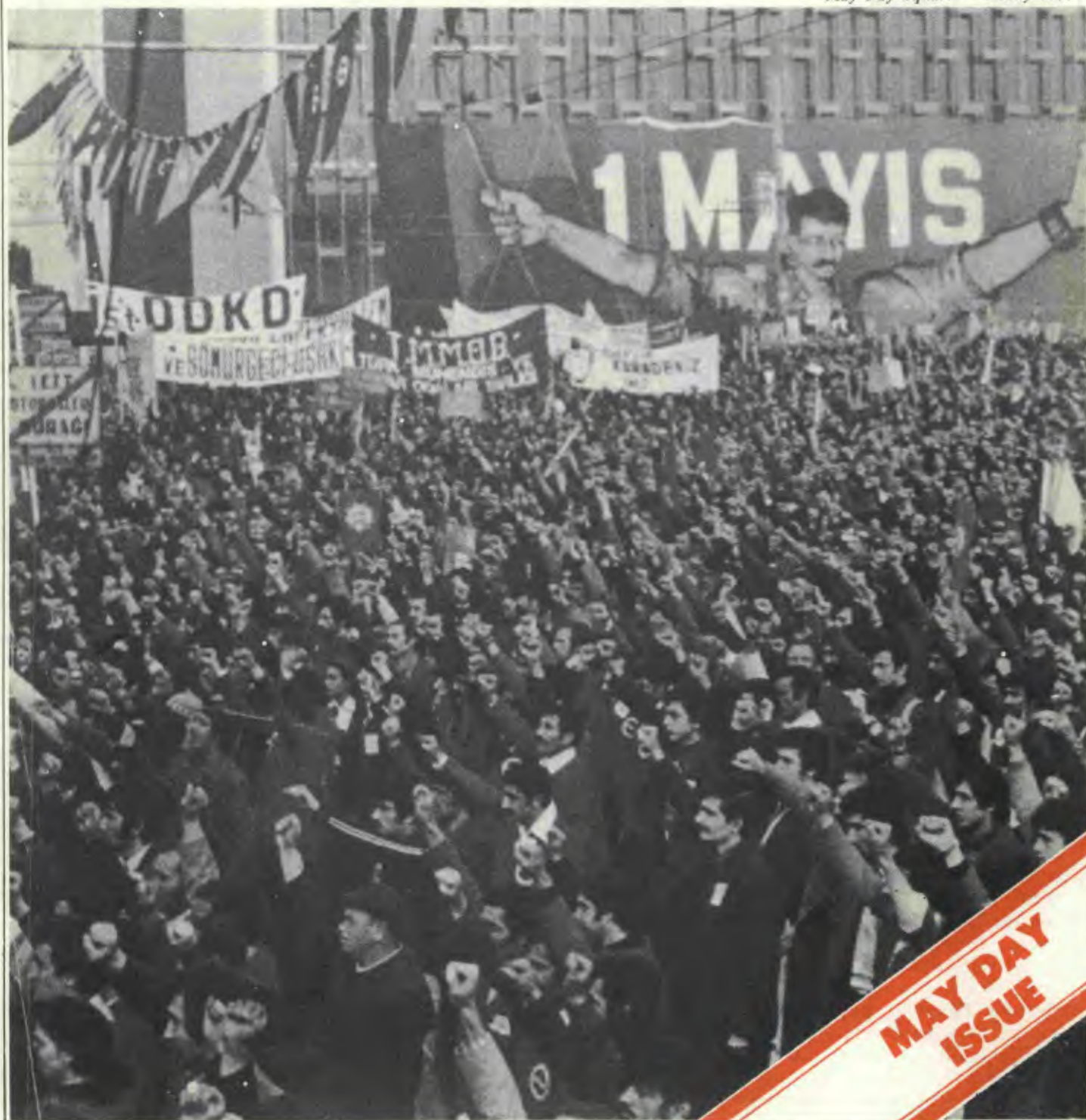
# Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey

## NEWSLETTER

Issue No: 11

25 April 1981

*May Day Square — 1 May 1977*



## May Day 1977 and Ahmet İsvan

The İstanbul May Day Rally of 1977, held in Taksim Square, (renamed May Day Square that day by the demonstrators) was supported by over a million workers. Today, then Mayor of İstanbul, Ahmet İsvan lies in a fascist prison cell.

Ahmet İsvan was the Republican Peoples Party Mayor of İstanbul from 1973 to 1977. Following the fascist coup of 12th September, he was arrested along with other leaders of the revolutionary trade union confederation DISK, but was later released. In November he was yet again arrested along with leaders of DISK. This time it took several weeks before his family discovered his whereabouts.

During this period he was held at the Selimiya military barracks in İstanbul, where he was 'interrogated'. This 'interrogation' took the form of being blindfolded and tied to a chair for five days (*Guardian*, 9.2.1981). Fifty-five year old Ahmet İsvan was also denied access to a toilet, kept awake, forced to listen to the sounds of

other prisoners being tortured and witnessed the torture of other prisoners.

What was Ahmet İsvan's crime? The fascist generals claim that in 1977, while Mayor of İstanbul, Ahmet provided municipal lorries for the May Day Rally. İsvan's only crime was that he assisted in preparing the biggest May Day demonstration ever in Turkey. For this crime the fascists threw him into a prison cell and tortured him.

So worried have the fascists become that they broadcast on Turkish Television a ten minute clip showing the interrogation of Ahmet İsvan. In this short extract (the total interview lasted one and a half hours!) İsvan denied that he personally had been tortured. His family, though, have challenged the validity of the televised interrogation. They have said that the TV interrogation did not deal with the related points. 'We never alleged any of the things which were asked about on television' (*Guardian*, 23.2.1981).

## Past May Days in Turkey

May Day celebrations have been illegal since the formation of the Republic. In 1976, for the first time, 300,000 people ignored the bans and took part in the May Day demonstration. It was a glorious show of strength of the working people.

This frightened the ruling class of Turkey. In 1977, all kinds of threats and provocations were used to prevent May Day celebrations. Prior to May Day, daily papers were filled with rumours that İstanbul would be turned into a bloodbath if the march went ahead. Despite all the efforts to prevent May day, 700,000 people joined the march, the largest May Day demonstration in the capitalist world. Fascists, together with MIT (National Intelligence Organisation) organised an attack on the demonstration. Just as Türkler, then General Secretary of DISK, finished his speech, machine-gun fire started from all round the square. 40 people were killed and hundreds injured. Later, the National

In 1978 the same sort of threat was used. But 500,000 people took to the streets. This was again the largest May Day demonstration in the capitalist world. 50,000 workers were on duty to defend the demonstration from any

attack.

This show of determination and consciousness compelled the ruling class to ban the May Day 1979 in İstanbul at any cost. Martial law authorities declared a 2 day curfew on 1st of May. Tanks and army units moved in; İstanbul was occupied by the army. Trade union leaders, instead of insisting and preparing for May Day in İstanbul, gave in quite quickly and decided to hold the demonstration in İzmir. 70,000 people attended the meeting.

This concession opened the way. May Day 1980 was banned all over the country by the martial law authorities. There was even talk, among the trade union leaders of holding it in Cyprus! A few days before 1st May, Adana martial law authority allowed the May Day demonstration with many restrictions, such as: no shouting of slogans, no "separatist" placards, no placards in Kurdish, no other flag but the Turkish flag and no other pictures but the pictures of "Great Turks" were to be carried.

May Day 1980 became a turning point in the class struggle which led to the fascist junta.

## May Day International Day of Labour

May Day has long been the focal point of working class solidarity and internationalism. Ever since the Haymarket Massacre in the USA last century the overwhelming desire of destroying class oppression has been expressed on the First of May.

Wherever a working class movement has formed, the expression of its political strength and maturity has been exhibited on May Day. For decades this day has marked the struggles of working people in changing from capitalist to socialist society.

When we celebrate May Day this year we remember all those unsung heroes of the working class and its allies who have given and are giving their lives in the cause of the liberation of humanity. Especially do we remember those who are fighting fascism, that monster of finance capital.

Throughout the world — East and West — workers carry red banners and shout slogans. Under fascism bloody terror marches to crush the workers' movement. Fascism in Turkey came to prevent May Day demonstrations and any other manifestations of working class solidarity, fascism came to remove any threat to the rule of finance capital. However, Turkey's workers are "bloodied but unbowed": now is the time when workers around the world can best express their solidarity with the workers of Turkey struggling against fascist bestiality. The fascist junta in Turkey is the creature of finance capital and imperialism, which are, after all, the twin enemies of working people the world over.

May Day is thus the occasion for us to show our abhorrence of fascist barbarity and line up on the side of international working class unity. May Day is the day when workers across the world stand shoulder to shoulder. This MAY DAY let us shout: Working people of Turkey — we march in solidarity with you!

Down with the fascist junta!

Long live the fight for democratic rights in Turkey!

# Letters from Turkey

## Tortures

Friends,  
Fascism in Turkey is making even 60 year-olds vomit blood! One place where this occurs is in Ödemiş, İzmir county.

Reasons for torture include: being revolutionary, not obeying the curfew, and speaking out your opposition to the junta.

### Those who torture:

Gendarme Unit Commander Yılmaz and his 35-40 year old driver; an MİT (National Security Service — *Newsletter*) "Army" staff member using the names Abdi or Ahmet; plus a special team of torturers.

### Places of torture:

1. Ödemiş Gendarme Station.  
2. Ödemiş Police Station. 3. İzmir Second Branch (police — *Newsletter*).

### Places of detention:

1. Gendarme and Police Stations.  
2. Cinemas. 3. Sports halls.

### Forms of torture:

1. Falaka (beating the soles of the feet — *Newsletter*). 2. Pulling out fingernails. 3. Electrocution. 4. Forcing clubs into the anus or vagina. 5. Raping girls and women.

### Those tortured:

1. The majority are rank and file anti-fascists from the Republican Peoples Party (social-democratic — *Newsletter*). 2. Democratic executive members of co-operatives. 3. A former executive member (Hasan Kutlu) and 2 new executive member of the İzmir Köy-Koop Union (peasant cooperative — *Newsletter*). Their whereabouts are now unknown even to their families; they are presumed dead. 4. 70 to 80 year old peasants accused of carrying guns, one of whom is Yusuf Batı (he has one lung missing).

Hundreds of relatives of those undergoing torture and other anti-fascists wait at gendarme and police stations; this produced an order from İzmir to cease torture on all but political prisoners.

İzmir

## Deportation and Extortion

After the fascist coup, oppression, torture and terror against the working class and people have been increased. On these issues we can give two items of news, one from İstanbul, the other from Sivas.

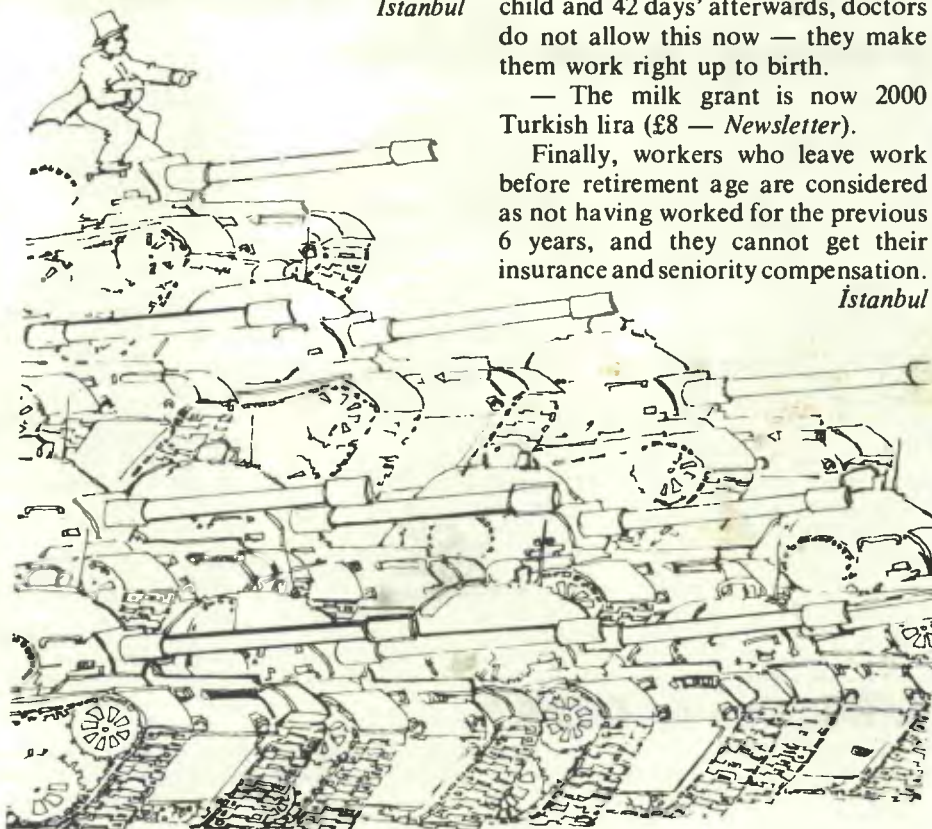
In İstanbul, during recent weeks, police and soldiers have raided all the cafes, detaining those who do not have work or an İstanbul address, and have sent them back to their home towns.

Those between 15 and 30 years of age, even if they have work and identity papers, have been taken to police stations and their identity checked.

The other news is about oppression in the villages of Sivas county. The reason for this repression is "donations to the Army"!

Gendarme stations have demanded of village elders that even small villages must make donations of 10,000 Turkish liras, and that larger villages must provide higher amounts. There are about 30 villages around us in Sivas county; all have been asked for money. Those elders who do not bring any money or bring less than the amount demanded are forced to sign a statement to that effect.

İstanbul



## Workers Rights

I want to present the conditions in a textile factory in İstanbul:

— When a worker is 15 minutes late, the wage for 30 minutes is deducted.

— 300 Turkish lira had been deducted for a day's absence prior to the coup; after the coup it is now 500 Turkish lira. The workers give this the nickname of "return to zero".

— When permission is given to see a doctor, wages are deducted according to the hours of absence. (This was illegal before the fascist coup — *Newsletter*).

— There are day-rate workers who are uninsured: their daily wage was only 250 Turkish lira even before the coup. The exact number of such workers is unknown.

— In the spinning section, the main production section, a worker produces 540kg per day. This is sold for 1000 Turkish lira per kg; the price of 5kg is given to the worker as a monthly wage!

The situation of women workers is as follows:

— Although according to collective bargaining agreements there is a 42 days' leave before the birth of a child and 42 days' afterwards, doctors do not allow this now — they make them work right up to birth.

— The milk grant is now 2000 Turkish lira (£8 — *Newsletter*).

Finally, workers who leave work before retirement age are considered as not having worked for the previous 6 years, and they cannot get their insurance and seniority compensation.

İstanbul

## Turkish Progressives in Britain

The Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain (UTPB) and other Turkish organisations have always participated in the May Day March and Rally ever since they were founded. UTPB has attracted large numbers from the Turkish community, both from the workers and students, to take part in the May Day procession alongside their counterparts from Britain and other countries. On many occasions organisers thanked them for the turnout they had achieved and expressed their admiration for their colourful and high-spirited contingent.

The Turkish community in this country takes part in the May Day procession under the banner of the May Day committee, which has branches in various sectors of industry. Turkish workers join the march under their factory May Day Committee banner or as representatives from the catering industry.

1981 has a significance for the Turkish community in Britain. Turkey being under a fascist dictatorship, they will march for their brothers and sisters in their country, adding their voices to those of their class brothers and sisters here. They have one message to make heard:

**HELP THE FIGHT TO STOP THE TORTURE OF WORKERS AND RESTORE DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY!**



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