TURKEY NEWSLETTER

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



Issue 39

October 1983



We should intensify our efforts against this inhuman dictatorship

by Alf Lomas MEP

There is obviously no hope that the British Government will speak out the atrocities being perpetrated against the Turkish people by the military junta. The death of hunger strikers and the resolute attitude of their supporters are hardly likely to evoke support from a government which let Irish hunger strikers go to their deaths. This makes it all the more important that the rest of us should continue to speak out and to intensify our efforts on behalf of the courageous Turkish people, who are struggling against this inhuman dictatorship.

Many Trade Union leaders and MPs in Britain have already been outspoken in their condemnation of the present trials in Ankara of respected Turkish Trades Union leaders and peace activists. Following the action of a group of MPs and Trades Union leaders in writing to the Military High Court to plead for

leaders of the peace committee, they were accused by the Turkish authorities of committing criminal offence"

Strong protests have also been made by the Socialist Group in the European Parliament. Through its intiatives in the European Parliament, the Group secured the blocking of E.E.C. aid to Turkey and the suspension of the Joint Parliamentary Committee.

The Socialist Group made a scathing attack on the new Constitution, arguing that it "does not represent a genuine step on the road back to democracy even if elections are held because democratic principles and basic rights are not safeguarded and certain provisions conflict with the European Convention of Human Rights. This applies particularly to the fact that all former leading politicians will

continue to be banned from political life. Restrictions of freedom of the press and of trade union activities will continue and the national minorities will be deprived of their cultural identity." The statement deplored the fact that no alternative to the draft was permitted, opposition and criticism could not be expressed and democratic politicians were not allowed to speak against it.

The Socialist Group has also strongly condemned the restriction of human rights, the torture, the large numbers held in detention, and the continuing political trials.

There is no doubt that Socialists in Europe are determined to do everything possible to help to bring freedom and democracy to Turkey and to end the vicious policies of the present military dictatorship.

> ALF LOMAS, MEP London North East

Letter t the Editor of Th Tim s

The Editor. The Times, P.O. Box 7, 200 Grays Inn Road London WC1X 8EZ

13th September 1983

Roger Scruton's feature article on Turkey (30th August) is wrong both in fact and in analysis. It reads as if it were a reprinted press handout from the military regime itself.

He ignores the fact that while martial law did exist in many parts of Turkey before the coup of 1980, the killings had continued. Similarly, he conveniently omits to mention that — whilst three parties have been "allowed" to take part in the forthcoming election charade twelve parties in all have been vetoed. And he seems to be unaware that mass show trials are underway, that torture is rife in Turkish jails, that the press is heavily censored, and that human rights are being regularly flouted.

commentators, British and Turkish, that there was a great sense of relief amongst ordinary people in Turkey when the military regime initially took over and the daily terror ended. To say that does not, of course, justify military intervention in a democracy, nor does it obviate the need to question what and who lay behind the terrorist campaign.

But it is also widely felt in Turkey that the military regime has gone

It is common amongst all too far, and that its attempts to interfere so blatently in the electoral process are not only unforgiveable but counter productive too. Your own leader of the 15th August was far more perceptive than Mr Scruton's shocking apologia for an and undemocratic oppressive regime.

> Yours sincerely, Chris Smith MP Clare Short MP Alex Lyon

Hunger strike in Diyarbakir

On 1st September, defendants in the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) trial in Diyarbakır declared in court that they had begun a hunger strike against torture, inhuman prison conditions, and restrictions on their access to their lawyers. The defendants were beaten and removed from the court. This was followed by similar declarations by defendants in other trials in Diyarbakır.

It is reported that a total of 2,119

political prisoners in Diyarbakır are taking part in the hunger strike. 110 have stated their readiness to continue until death.

It has also been reported that the authorities launched an armed attack against the prisoners. Gunfire was heard throughout the district around the prison. This led the families of the prisoners to gather outside the prison. Many people were detained.

Unwitting tribute to hunger strikers

After nearly two months of denials and equivocations, the Turkish authorities have at last decided to admit that hunger strikes have been taking place in Turkey's military prisons (see Turkey Newsletter, no:38). In the letter sent to Richard Balfe M.E.P. they unwittingly paid tribute to the political prisoners on hunger strike. According to the letter, "their target... goes beyond a simple protest", "the aim of the strikes was to

undermine the administration and thereby obtain internal and external support".

Do the authorities at the Turkish Embassy in London really think that this discredits the hunger strikers? That concerned democrats and progressives the world over, such as Richard Balfe, Chris Smith, Clare Short, Alex Lyon, and all the others in Britain and in many other countries, who have raised their voices in protest against torture, unjust imprisonment and farcical show trials, will be deterred from this protest because the hunger strikers aim to "undermine the administration" responsible for these horrors?

This hunger strike which, according to reports, has been brutally suppressed in Istanbul and other cities only to burst out anew in Diyarbakır where 2,000 political prisoners started a hunger strike on 2nd September, would be deserving of the greatest respect and support if the political prisoners were only fighting against the torture, mistreatment and degradation to which they themselves have been subjected personally. But to raise a revolt against the fascist administration from within its own prison cells and torture chambers — that is an enterprise which rightly calls forth profound admiration and praise.

In many countries in the world today, especially in Latin America, there is open revolt against fascist and dictatorial regimes. The hunger strikers in Turkey's military prisons have the honour and distinction of having raised the revolt from within the prisons themselves.

The chargé d'affaires at the Turkish Embassy in London has paid unwitting tribute to the hunger strikers!

Turkish Embassy Letter

Mr. Richard Balfe, M.E.P., European Parliament

August 19, 1983

Dear Mr. Balfe,

With reference to your telemessage dated August 4, 1983 please be informed that the hunger strikes which it is explained that the aim of the strikes took place in various prisons in Istanbul between July 8 and August 6, 1983, with and thereby obtain internal and external the alleged aim of improving the support. conditions prevailing in the said prisons Metris, Sultanahmet, Kabakoz and unfounded. Sağmalcılar-2 Military Prisons.

Although their alleged aim was to improve the conditions prevailing in the

said prisons, in reality, they wanted to create a suitable atmosphere abroad as well as in Turkey, in order to reach their target which goes beyond a simple protest. In fact, in a statement drawn up by the illegal organisation, "Kurtulus" was to undermine the administration

The information supplied by the also obstructing transfers of prisoners competent Turkish authorities proves between these establishments, have that the allegations of deaths and been carried out by some prisoners in deteriorating health conditions are also

Yours sincerely,

Turhan Firat Charge d'Affaires a.i.

Leading artist t rtur d

As reported in the Guardian on 8th September 1983 in regard to the Peace Association Trial, a leading artist, Orhan Taylan, a member of the Turkish Peace Association, said that he had been tortured while in police custody in Ankara in August.

"Mr Taylan had told a Court trying him and 29 other intellectuals for running the Peace Association that he had been given electric shocks and beatings in an attempt to get him to admit to membership of the outlawed Turkish Communist Party" (The Guardian, September 1983).

Mr Taylan is only one of the thousands of people unjustly imprisoned and tortured in Turkey today. The reason is clear. As Mr Alex Lyon, Barrister and former Secretary of State, said at a press conference held after he returned from a fact-finding mission to Turkey: "They come from different professions in Turkey and it is obvious that the authorities selected a representative from each area of public dissent in Turkey to threaten others not to speak out of line".

Detailed information about the Taylan case can be found in the 6th September issue of *Cumhuriyet*. We have the news report and appended it to this letter. However, it must be pointed out that there exists censorship and "self-censorship" in the press in Turkey and the report must be assumed to be underestimating Mr Taylan's experiences.

We urge you to take up this issue and take immediate action, ie, send protest messages to:

H.E. the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey, 43 Belgrave Square, LONDON, SW1

and/or to:

Kenan Evren, Head of State. Ankara

Pass motions in your organisation to show your solidarity with the democratic artists, professionals, workers and other people undergoing torture in Turkey today.

Please inform CDDRT about your protests, solidarity messages, motions, etc.

TRADE UNION AND DEMO

Report of the CDDRT Fringe

WE CAN AND WE

Doug Grieve: ... There are quite a number of Trade Union members in this country; they see little or nothing about the problems of democracy in Turkey generally — and its only committed Comrades who are either affiliated to this organisation — CDDRT — or they read it in the more progressive press things that are going on within the Turkish Trade Unions. And a whole number of the delegates attending this Conference we are quite certain, do know the background to the struggle of the working class in Turkey...

We know too the problems within the organised unions when they were allowed to organise. And become able to recruit able to negotiate terms and conditions. Even then there were two periods when they were denied the right to strike. And then the real facist Junta took over in 1980. All shades and terms of democracy for the Trade Unionists in Turkey just totally and completely disappeared, with the system used by Government to make sure that the Trade Unions had no voice by declaring so many...factory workers even, to be public employees who were denied any right to strike so that the Junta set about quite clearly making sure that there was no democracy, and in fact what Tebbit is starting to do to the British Trade Union movement would be a progressive left-wing union law compared to what the Turkish Trade Union movement has been facing. But then all the Comrades are aware of that sort of situation.

I just wondered whether it may be of some information to our colleaques that on the basis of the position of the hunger strike that is taking place now and on the question of the DISK leaders who are on trial, out Union has written to the Ambassador in London and to General Evren protesting at the treatment of Turkish Trade Unionists and the DISK Trade Unionists in prison... we get the Newsletter, we read in the 'Morning Star' what is happening...there is no doubt in my mind that there is a wide and general concern in the Trade Union movement about the situation in Turkey... But I think... that we should be very much more aware and very much more involved in democracy within Trade Unions in Turkey...

So what concerns me is perhaps we still have not done enough to make the Trade Unionists aware. Now, our Union has written and protested. We have been with delegations to the Turkish Embassy. We have had no joy there, we have had no reply to our letters — all typical of the type of activities of a fascist junta. And it is just as well your Newsletter appears to get the message over to colleagues in the Trade Union movement. But again it is not only committed colleagues we need to get...

I don't think we have got over to the public the terrible conditions in which prisoners, Trade Unionists are being held in prisons in Turkey.

Alex Lyon: Spoke about his impressions in Turkey

Well, until 3 weeks ago Mr. Chairman, my knowledge of Turkey was less than anyone in this room. I had never been to Turkey and it has not been one of the areas of my speciality. I had been interested in Africa, India, Eastern Europe. I had been to a lot of trials around the world—nothing has shocked me as much as what I saw in my week in Turkey. And although it is perfectly true to say that

Chaired by: BILL DEAL, Speakers: ALEX LYON, Fo DOUG GRIEVE: General Sec

deprivation of human rights is common throughout the world, not least in the Phillipines or Chile — we all deplore what is going on in those countries —the interesting thing about Turkey from my point of view is that there is something we can do about it... in which the Western countries could put pressure on. Quite apart from the fact that the Junta is absolutely dependant upon American assistance with NATO weapons and aid. Turkey is the second largest donee of American aid - the first is Israel it is interesting to know whether the Americans think the Third World exists. But if we could put some pressure on the West and particularly upon America to do something about Turkey, it is possible to change it — it may not be possible to change what goes on in the Phillipines. It is possible to change what goes on in Turkey and that's why it is so important that we should get it across. What surprises me now I have read all the briefings is how much people have known before. The ICFTU have a considerable number of documents on what has been going on and the TUC, as Doug says, have done things before. What we have not managed to do yet is to get Turkey across in the way that Namibia or Zimbabwe or Uganda was across in the British press. And somehow or other we have got to break that

Now let me tell you why I feel so shocked. We saw the Public Prosecutor on the final day and asked him how many trials there were under martial Law. This was the Public Prosecutor for the Istanbul area and he said there were 38 in his area. There were probably as many in Ankara and there certainly are others. So throughout the country you maybe have up to 100 massive trials...

But what is so shocking about DISK, and we sat all day deliberately just to show solidarity but also to get some kind of flavour, is what the particular allegations are in this case. As you will all probably know, DISK sprang out of TURKIS which was the Turkish Trade Union movement established in about 1946, which is a totally non-political union, non-progressive bunch of unions and bascially not very good at representing workers' interests, and in 1976 there was a disaffiliation by those unions who formed DISK. And over the period of 13 years until the Coup, DISK was very active in doing exactly what progressive Trade Unions throughout the West do - and no more - the kind of strikes it ran, the kind of publicity they ran, of propaganda they used, were the kind of things you would get out of any decent union in the West — particulrly left-wing trade unions in the West. And it is true, the language was sometimes that of Marxism-Leninism (and communism has been forbidden it Turkey since Ataturk) it is part of the constitution. Nevertheless at the time when these speeches were made, at the time when these articles were written, at the time when these acts were being under-taken, the existing civil government did not regard those as being in

RATIC RIGHTS IN TURKEY

Meeting at TUC Conference

MUST DO MORE!

President, Fire Brigades Union ner MP and Minister of State etary, Tobacco Workers' Union

breach of the legal code. And what is now being done is that that whole period of 13 years is being examined in the DISK trial in order to make offences out of what was then regarded as legal

The second and most important part is that there were 78 people on trial. 52 were originally charged — the death sentence is being asked for in the case of the 52. All the 52 are in prison. The others were originally in prison but have been released during the trial and can attend if they wish, or not if they don't wish, in that particular trial, but the 52 are there in prison all the time and are being subjected to very considerable pressure. Initially most of them were in a period of interrogation before the trial began, some for as long as 115 days and there is absolute evidence that many of them were tortured in that time. They are not being tortured now in the same sort of way, but they are being abused.

In recent months — in the middle of August — they were taken out in the middle of the night and stood in the yard naked for 7 hours whilst their cells were searched and ever since, whenever they go for trial, they are searched, stripped naked and searched completely. All their notes are taken away. They have no way of keeping a record of what is going on in the trial. They have no way of noting down anything that they want to put to their lawyers. Their lawyers see them for about 20 minutes a week but they don't see one person in 20 minutes-they see 20 people in 20 minutes. So they actually get one minute in which to brief their lawyer, and that takes place with a grill between them and a soldier on each side of the grill, who is able to listen to the whole conversation so there is no way in which there can be said to be proper legal representation.

What we saw on our one day in Court was one of the three gymnasiums in the Metris barracks which is a huge barracks, about as big as Aldershot itself. A fairly modern barracks all these gymnasiums are modern — they have never been used as gymnasiums, only as Courts. Incidentally we were a bit bewildered to find that the DISK trial meets only on two days a week. So these people have been in prison nearly three years and they only go to Court twice a week. We thought that this was disgraceful, that the Court was not dealing with one case and getting rid of it. But afterwards we found out that on the other three days they dealt with other cases and that there were three Courts siting in Metris all the time...

Now the crime in the Penal Code says by force: there is no allegations anywhere in the indictment of any use of weapons or possession of weapons. All that is said to be force is that they used normal trade union activity in order to further the interests of their members. Now they are not charged under Section 141 of the Penal Code but that is behind it — that colours the outlook of the Judges. Section

141 is one that ATATURK put into his original constitution which took place shortly after the Russian Revolution. Ataturk was frightened of communist influence in Turkey, so he has a 'thing' in his Constitution saying it is an offence to propagate or work for the hegemony of one class over another. On that basis any member of the TUC is bound to be convicted. This is not charged against DISK but against the Peace Association people. This offence has never been used by any civil government in the history of Turkey, but it is dragged out every time there is a military coup, which takes place once every ten years. It is this idea that if you are seeking to promote the interests of one class over another, that must be Communism, and Communism is illegal. Therefore you are seeking to subvert the State because you are advocating Communism. That is the whole argument behind the 855 pages of the indictment.

But in addition to the 855 pages they have a huge pile of files that they found in DISK, of speeches that were made publically or photographs in the newspapers — some of them photographs of the May Day March, and what happened there. And these are then the prosecution documents. No witness has been called against any of the members of DISK in the trial. There is simply the bundle of documents.

(...)

Now when we went to see the Military Prosecutor, we asked him as best we could through our interpreter about the trial. He said he thought the DISK trial would be over by December. I don't think so for one moment but he said he thought it would be over by December and it was clear from the way he said it and the kind of other comments he made that he simply assumed they would be found quilty. So I think it is quite likely that certainly most of the people who are in prison at the moment, most of the 52 out of 78 are going to be convicted and the death sentence is asked for each of them—for us to think that people can be killed—because that is what will happen for doing what any member—I mean Frank Chappell would be guilty under this indictment—it is any kind of normal trade union activity which is being used.

The procedure is, the Military Prosecutor reads out the indictment — all 855 pages. Then the lawyers get up and say what they think of the prosecution case at that stage. Then the Defendants are allowed to get up and say what they think of the indictment in general. Then the Judge reads out these files which are the prosecution case and goes on reading those for months on end — every so often one of the accused can get up and say something in the course of that.

Then at the end of that, each accused can get up and say his say. But what he has to do is think back over all those documents and say what his answer to any individual document. How the hell are you going to do that when you cannot take notes — they strip you, take away your things, you cannot keep your lawyer informed. How the hell are you going to keep it all in your head? I do not know. There cannot be any civilised response in that sort of way.

So what it all amounts to is they make speeches — heart rendering speeches...

Council of Europe Committee r buffs junta's electin ply

Whatever hopes the junta still had of being able to pass off the November 6th elections as a "return to parliamentary democracy" were dealt a severe blow by the resolution recently adopted by the Political Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly.

The resolution, drawn up by Mr Steiner, declared that "the parliament which will be elected in Turkey on 6 November will not be able to be considered as representing the Turkish people in a democratic manner, and could not therefore validly constitute a delegation to participate in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe".

Among the considerations which led to the adoption of the resolution, and were noted in it, were: * that the laws adopted under the Constitution were not the subject of free discussion:

* that the National Security Council had prevented the free formation of political parties;

* that the derogations from the rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights remain in force:

* the silence of the Turkish authorities in the face of the humanitarian appeal addressed by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly to General Evren to ease the lot of all prisoners of conscience and to save the lives of prisoners on hunger strike in various Turkish prisons;

* the situation in the universities where recent purges run counter to freedom of education and conscience; * and repressive measures towards the press.

In addition to the resolution, a memorandum presented by Mr Steiner called attention to the veto by the National Security Council of 454 out of 779 people who had applied to be accepted as founding members of political parties. As a result, only 3 parties will be allowed to contest the elections, whereas 15 had applied to do so.

The memorandum refers to the continuing hunger strikes in the military prisons as "the major event in the field of human rights" in Turkey, noting the complete silence of the Turkish press on the subject and the support for the prisoners in the member states of the Council of Europe.

3rd anniversary of the coup

A strong voice raised against fascism

The 3rd anniversary of the fascist coup with which the Turkish army seized power was marked by many demonstrations and meetings held in various countries in Europe.

The most massive demonstration was that held in Cologne on 10th September and organised jointly by virtually all the left-wing organisations from Turkey. They included Dev-Yol (Revolutionary Path), İşçinin Sesi (Workers' Voice), Partizan, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) KOM-KAR, People's Liberation (Halkın Kurtuluşu) and FIDEF. Alongside these, were contingents from the German Communist Party and its youth organisation, as well as from the Green Party. In all, more than 10,000 people joined in the march.

Following the march, an open-air meeting took place at which speeches condemning the junta and calling for a stepped-up struggle against it were made by representatives from the various organisations, Included among the speakers were Yücel Top, representing the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (DISK) and a spokesman from the Chilean antifascist movement.

This massive demonstration took place at a time when over 2000 political prisoners went on hunger strike in Diyarbakır Prison where hundreds of Kurdish political prisoners are facing continued torture and the threat of possible death sentences. The news of the hunger strike brought additional urgency and determination to the

protest march and rally.

Demonstrations and meetings held in Europe showed that a strong voice is being raised by the workers and democrats abroad. This voice is forming the basis of a strong solidarity movement with the people of Turkey who are struggling against fascism in Turkey.



Scene from the protest demonstration in Cologne

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR **DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY**

29-30 October 1983 County Hall, Council Chamber

CONSTITUTION OF THE CDDRT

- I. The name of the organisation shall be the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey (CDDRT).
- 2. The aims of CDDRT are as follows: End military rule, martial law, torture and executions.

Release of political prisoners.

- Freedom for all democratic organisations.
 End national oppression of the Kurds and
 national minorities.
 Stop expansionism; end the occupation of
- Withdraw Turkey from NATO and close all NATO bases
- No military, political or economic support for the
- opponents.
- fascist junta.

 Totally oppose junta harassment of overseas

- Organise solidarity on the basis of the foregoing utilising every means at our disposal.
- 3. Organisations and individuals accepting the aims of CDDRT can apply to affiliate. Such applications are subject to the approval of the General Council. Affiliation fees shall be set by the General Council and became payable from 1 January each year.
- 4. Congress is the highest body of CDDRT and 4. Congress is the highest body of CDDR1 and shall meet every two years. It shall consist of delegates from Branches and affiliated organis-ations, and individual affiliates. Congress shall elect the General Council and consider reports and motions. The conduct of business shall be on the basis of Standing Orders approved by Congress. Pre-Congress arrangements are the responsibility of the retiring General Council. Each Congress shall decide the size of the General Council.
- 5. The General Council is the continuing body of Congress and shall meet quarterly. It shall appoint the Executive Committee which is responsible to it. The General Council shall have the right to co-
- 6. The Executive Committee shall consist of the General Secretary and such other members as the General Council may decide. The Executive Committee shall meet at least fortnightly and be responsible for the day to day work of CDDRT.
- Local Branches of CDDRT are formed with the approval of the General Council.
- 8. This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority at a Congress.
- 9. The General Council may call, or upon request by two-thirds of affiliated national organisations shall call, a Special Congress.

CDDRT General Council

Bedir AYDEMIR Richard BALFE, MEP John M BLOOM Philip BRAY Sandra HODGSON Alf LOMAS, MEP Aydın MERİÇ Jim MOODY Stan NEWENS Ernie ROBERTS MP Alan SAPPER Marion SARAFI Faik SINKIL Tijen UĞURİŞ Martin UPHAM Bob WRIGHT and one representative each from: Turkish Students' Federation of the UK Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain Union of Turkish Women in Britain Union of Turkish Workers

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To the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey.

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Sheila Wright

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Return to CDDRT, 29 Parkfield St, London NI OPS. Tel: 01-226 2668.

LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE FRINGE MEETING

TURKEY — PERVERSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

5.15pm, Tuesday 4 October Old Ship Hotel, Kings Road Brighton

Chair:
Ernie Roberts, MP
Speakers:
Clare Short, MP
Chris Smith, MP
Alex Lyon
Jeremy Corbyn, MP