

# SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

FOR TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY



Chairperson: Alex Kitson

32 Ickburgh Road  
London E5 3AD

Mrs Margaret Thatcher, MP  
Prime minister  
10 Downing street  
London SW1

18th February 1986

Dear Mrs Thatcher,

I would like to express to you our deep regret for inviting Mr Ozal, the Prime Minister of the fascist regime in Turkey enabling him to pay his first visit to a Western country.

We firmly believe that the prime purpose of the visit is to boost the image of the fascist regime, to gain credit and legitimacy for it.

However, any support for the present regime can only serve the continuation of suffering of the peoples of Turkey.

The facts clearly show that the so-called steps towards democracy have not changed the essence of the regime. In Turkey today, a seminar organised by a well-known publishing company, to be attended also by a prominent member of the British Parliament, could be banned at a stroke by civilian authorities in Istanbul where Martial Law had been lifted a while ago. Only yesterday, a military court on the continuation of the imprisonment of 6 prominent intellectuals for their involvement in the Turkish Peace Association while conveniently enabling Mr Ozal to argue that 6 other defendants were released.

The Amnesty International Report dated 6th February 1986 gives the latest account of the human rights violations with examples of systematic torture in Turkey.

Regarding the trade unions, the notorious DISK trial at a military court involving 1477 trade unionists continues to be a serious threat and a source of deep concern for the labour movement despite dropping the demands for capital punishment in 78 cases.

The present trade union legislation, far from complying with minimal international standards, was prepared in total disregard of the criticisms of ILO. The restoration of basic trade union rights has become the primary concern of the trade union movement.

Apart from the tragic state of human rights and democratic freedoms in Turkey, the representative capacity of Mr Ozal, his Government and the present Turkish Parliament is questionable. The general elections held in November 1983 was described by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as not reflecting the free will of the people due to severe restrictions and bans imposed by the generals.

We believe that the majority of the British people would not approve the political and economic support given to such a regime and the sale of arms to it some of which might well be used against the peoples of Turkey.

Yours faithfully,



Alex Mitson

Chair

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TÜSTAV TARİH ARASTIRMA VAKFI

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## IMPORTANT DAYS IN THE LIFE OF DISK

### - 13th February 1967

DISK was founded by four unions affiliated to Turk-Is, in the leadership of Kemal Turkler.

### - 15-16th June 1970

DISK organised a general strike to prevent the passage of a law aimed to destroy DISK organisationally. Three workers were killed by security forces.

### - May 1975

DISK adopted the policy of class and mass trade unionism in its 5th Congress.

### - September 1975

Open air rallies were organised in Izmir, Bursa and Istanbul in defence of democratic rights.

### - 11th April 1976

General Secretary Ibrahim Guzelce, one of the founders of DISK, died. He played a decisive role in adopting class unionism in DISK.

### - 1st May 1976

56 year long ban on May Day rally was broken: DISK organised the first mass May Day celebration in Istanbul.

### - 16th September 1976

General strike organised by DISK to stop introduction of the State Security Courts.

### - 1st May 1977

Magnificent May Day rally attacked by secret police with indiscriminate machine-gun fire killing 34 workers. However, this attack did not defer DISK from organising other mass rallies on May Day.

- May 1977 - February 1978

Metal workers' strike involving some 40 000 members of Maden-Is. The employers' union in the industry (MESS) was led by Turgut Ozal, the present Prime Minister.

- December 1977

DISK's 6th Congress. Abdullah Basturk elected DISK President.

- 20th March 1978

DISK organised a one-day general strike to warn against mounting fascist terror.

- September 1979

The second metal workers' strike starts; Turgut Ozal still in the leadership of MESS.

- June 1980

DISK 7th Congress puts an end to divisions by electing a united leadership and adopting policies with unanimous decisions.

- 22nd July 1980

Kemal Turkler, President of Maden-Is, founder and former President of DISK, assassinated by fascist murderers.

- 12th September 1980

Military take-over. DISK banned. Its leaders and activists at all levels were ordered to surrender to Martial Law Commands. Majority of the DISK leadership, including President Basturk, detained within the first few weeks.

- 24th December 1981

DISK trial opens at Istanbul Martial Law Court with 52 death sentence demands. (Individual unions affiliated to DISK were also brought to trial, their trials were eventually combined with the main DISK trial, raising the number of defendants to 1477 and that of death sentences to 78.).

- September 1984

DISK leaders released on bail after 4 years in a military prison.

- January 1985

ETUC accepts the application of DISK for affiliation.

- January 1986

DISK trial continues. The military prosecutor drops charges carrying death sentence in all cases, but demands prison terms between 6-20 years.



# News from the

# TUC

General Secretary: Norman Willis

Head of Press and Information: Brendan Barber

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## FOR IMMEDIATE USE

February 17, 1986

### TURKEY

Commenting on the arrival in Britain today of the Turkish Prime Minister, TUC General Secretary Mr Norman Willis said: "Prime Minister Ozal is not welcome here by the British trade union Movement. The attempt to gain acceptance for his regime will not work with working people here.

"The fact that Turkey is not a democratic country, and trade union and other basic human rights cannot be practiced freely in Turkey. Trade unions are particularly restricted. The trade union centre DISK, which like the TUC is affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation, has been banned. Trials of hundreds of DISK leaders and members have been continuing for over four years. These people are not engaged in any violent activities - the authorities themselves acknowledge that. DISK sought to carry out normal trade union activities which should be fully accepted in any decent civilised country.

"We, and the European Trade Union Confederation which represents over 40 million trade unionists throughout our continent, have called for the immediate and unconditional release of the DISK leaders, and for the restoration of civil and trade union rights in Turkey in line with ILO Conventions. When such

conditions prevail we would be glad to welcome Turkish government representatives here."

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TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMA VAKFI  
TÜSTAV

## WHO IS OZAL ?

- \* Born in 1927. Electrical engineer. Worked for State Water Works (DSI) and later for the Department of Energy.
- \* He met Suleyman Demirel in early 1960s who was the Director of DSI at that time.
- \* When Demirel became Prime Minister in 1965 he appointed Ozal as the Head of the State Planning Department in 1966. Turgut Ozal and his brother Korkut (who later became an MP for the National Salvation Party, MSP) became famous as "the religious brothers".
- \* One of the first "achievements" of Ozal and his team was to introduce a 66% devaluation of the Turkish Pound in accordance with IMF demands.
- \* Following the military intervention on 12th March 1971, a short-lived government of traditional bureaucrats sacked Ozal and his team.
- \* Ozal went to the USA to work for the World Bank. He became "known" in influential circles.
- \* Returning to Turkey in 1975, he worked in top positions for Sabanci Holding and Koc Holding, the two leading names in big business in Turkey.
- \* He unsuccessfully attempted politics in 1977: He was a parliamentary candidate for MSP in Izmir, but was not elected.
- \* He became the Chair of the Union of Metal Goods Manufacturers (MESS). It was under his leadership that MESS forced 40 000 metal workers to go on a 7-month strike organised and led by their union Maden-Is, affiliated to DISK.
- \* He returned to public service in 1979 as Under-Secretary to the then PM Demirel and he prepared the infamous economic austerity package of 24th January 1980 imposed by the IMF. This package is generally accepted as one of the major factors leading to the military coup on 12th Sept 1980.
- \* After the coup, he was promoted to the post of Deputy PM, consolidating his position in the military regime. He and his "boys" got full control of the economy.

- \* Despite all austerity measures under military rule, economy was far from showing any sign of recovery. When the money-lenders' crisis broke out in July 1982 dragging thousands of small savers to the streets, Ozal and his closest colleague Erdem, the then Minister of Finance, quitted the government. Ozal went to the USA for the declared reason "to get slimmer".
- \* He indeed returned with a less unacceptable shape and declared his intention to form a political party.
- \* In 1983 the generals allowed Ozal's Motherland Party (ANAP) to contest the elections along with two puppet parties while preventing twelve others, despite Ozal's apparent efforts to portray his party as being critical of the regime in order to get a better following.
- \* His Party won the elections on 6th November 1983 and he became Prime Minister. Within a short period he and self-declared President General Evren stuck to each other heading towards the present Evren-Ozal fascist regime.

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ



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Solidarity Committee for Trade Union Rights and Democracy in Turkey;  
Campaign for the Defence of the Turkish Peace Movement;  
Solidarity Committee for Freedom of Art, Science and Expression in Turkey;  
Solidarity Committee for Women's Rights in Turkey.

P R E S S   R E L E A S E

## OFFICIAL VISIT OF TURKISH PM TURGUT ÖZAL TO LONDON 17th - 20th FEBRUARY 1986

Turkish PM Turgut Ozal will arrive in London on Monday February 17th as the official guest of Mrs. Margaret Thatcher. This marks the first official visit to a Western European country by a Turkish Premier since the coup of September 1980.

The visit is therefore of particular interest because this official invitation is intended to legitimise the post-coup regime in Turkey. Ozal's arrival in London is a public relations exercise to shore up a seriously unstable regime.

Very little has changed in Turkey since the dismantling of democracy by the Armed Forces.

As Amnesty International reports, systematic torture is rampant in police stations and prisons. Massaged 'official' Turkish statistics show that there are 15,569 political prisoners. The real numbers are higher.

A Turkish Opposition MP has named 113 people killed during torture. The Ankara mass circulation weekly Nokta published the verbatim confessions of a police torturer only to be impounded by the authorities and put on trial.

President General Evren has threatened the Leader of the Main Opposition Party Professor Aydin Güven Gürkan not "to interfere with torture allegations".

Decrees passed during the period of direct rule by the military junta have established the legal framework for a police state. The European Parliament has denounced the new Police Powers Bill as "incompatible"

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with democratic norms".

Even former conservative politicians are complaining about "state terror" and a "mute society" adding that the "soldiers have not returned to their barracks".

84 prisoners await hanging. Some 5000 death sentences have been called for in the mass martial law trials. The military as well as the Ozal government have refused to meet public demands for a general amnesty.

Hidden from the world's gaze, martial law continues in the nine Kurdish provinces of Turkey. These areas are under occupation by special army units. The population is terrorised. The area continues to suffer the excesses of a brutal military regime.

The main obstacle to democracy in Turkey is the military imposed 1982 Constitution. Pather than a legal document, this reads like a barrack regulations prohibiting 'pluralist luxuries' such as trade union rights, free speech, press freedoms and the right to form associations independent from the state.

The Turkish state is now identified with the all-powerful presidency of General Evren. A double-vetted parliament has been put under the barely disguised tutelage of the military establishment. "De-politicisation" is the current orthodoxy.

The few gains for human rights like the acquittal of 59 intellectuals for signing a petition demanding an end to torture and restoration of democracy are due to international solidarity. The same applies to the regime's retreats over the trade union (DISK) and Turkish Peace Association trials.

We the above mentioned organisations call upon British democratic public opinion, political parties, the labour movement and the peace movement to condemn Turgut Ozal's visit and to denounce the fascist dictatorship which he serves.

Democracy can not be restored in Turkey without getting rid of this regime and the Constitution which puts the peoples of Turkey in a straitjacket.