

Speech by Mr. Kemai Daysal, Member of DISK Executive Bureau

Dear friends and colleagues,

I would like to thank you for the invitation extended to me to participate in this meeting you have organised on the occasion of the 19th founding anniversary of DISK.

I ~~convey~~ the fraternal greetings of DISK members, and leading colleagues to the Solidarity Committee for Trade Union Rights and Democracy in Turkey, who have organised the meeting, to the TUC who have rendered an active support for the meeting and its General Secretary, brother Norman Willis, all our British ~~trade unionist~~ trade unionist colleagues who are taking part in the meeting, ⁱⁿ support of our struggle for trade union rights, democracy and freedom.

Before going into the subject matter itself, allow me to briefly touch upon a point: we cannot accept the fact that ~~the~~ Turgut Ozal is hosted in this country, as an official guest of the British Government. This is a result of British monopoly capital's desire to seize a share in Turkish markets. It also signifies an attempt to whitewash the dictatorship in our country by prioritising and using as a pretext Turkey's ^{geo-}political position. That ~~is why~~ ^{is why} I strongly protest this visit. The fact that British trade unionists, the democratic public opinion have also not accepted this visit and have undertaken various manifestations of protest, however, alleviated ~~our~~ our indignation a little bit. This resolute stance of democratic forces is an new and nice example of the solidarity with the democratic forces in Turkey. We highly appreciate this solidarity and are grateful for it.

Dear friends,

19th February is the founding anniversary of our Confederation DISK whose history is one full of honourful struggles. It is a

historic~~ly~~ day signifying the rise of our working class, on trade union level, against oppression, repression and exploitation. DISK was founded 19 years ago by a small group of workers. But, in a short span of time, it won a great and unwavering trust from the workers, as a result of its class - ~~social~~^{based} trade union policy and uncompromising struggle against the bosses. Prior to the 12th September ~~1961~~¹⁹⁶² it has already become, with its 600,000-strong^{membership} and 30 affiliated unions, quantitatively 2nd largest, yet regarding trade union efficiency and ~~activity~~, the determining trade union confederation in the country. Our working class, with the founding of DISK 19 years ago, took into its hands such an effective weapon in the struggle for trade union rights and freedoms. With such a weapon in its hands, our working class waged an honorable struggle for the extension of trade union rights and freedoms, for securing trade union unity, for the establishment ~~of~~ ^{of} an independent, democratic and free social order, against bosses, monopolies and all reactionary forces.

Dear friends,

~~while~~^{while} commemorating the 19th founding anniversary of DISK, we should take up and determine in what conditions Turkey is now, what kind of tasks face us today and we should do.

At the present, our country is living through an intertwined, double-sided process.

On the one side, Turkey is going through one of the most crisis-ridden and difficult conditions in its history.

Repression and barbarity of the dictatorship is going on.

Political arrests and torture continue unabated. Trade union,

democratic and political rights are still usurped. Our working class and other working strata are barbarously exploited under the repressive conditions of dictatorship. The cost of living has reached unbearable levels. In short, our peoples are faced with hunger, poverty, mass unemployment and consequently moral decay and social deprivation.

This is one side of the process we are experiencing.

However, on the other hand, ^{there is} another process, one which ~~inspires~~ inspires the democratic forces, ~~all~~ all patriots, one which enhances our hopes and expectations about the future of our country.

The discontent and opposition of, firstly our working class, of all working people, of all the forces in favour of democracy, is developing against the regime. The lies and demagogues of the dictatorship to the effect that democracy has been returned is not taken seriously by anyone. Except a handful of fairly big holding companies and monopolies, ~~all~~ all social sections are aware of and reacting against the country's drift, with each passing day, to abyss. This reaction is beginning to show itself in the form of open protests and mass actions. Undoubtedly, this is a positive development in our struggle for the bright future of our country.

Today, the obscure designs planned behind closed doors in order to prepare for the 12th September coup, have been brought to daylight more broadly. The factors which were determined and indicated by us, by our working class, are today grasped by much wider circles on the basis of their own experience. The dirty lines of the dictatorship and the putschist generals are beginning to appear openly. Criticism of the dictatorship ~~would~~ would no longer suffice.

Now it is time to hold them to account for what they have done. The bill the dictatorship is ought to pay to ~~our~~ people is great indeed.

Dear Colleagues,

I would also like to briefly touch upon the situation of DISK trial at the present stage.

DISK leaders were kept for four years in prison, under conditions of heavy oppression and torture, in such ^{an} unjust manner which would hurt the conscience of every honest person. Their trial, on the other hand, is going on since five years. There has never been, in any where in the world, a trade union trial as comprehensive and protracted as this. In the last conclusive remarks of the prosecutor not as a single, justifiable pretext or evidence has been put forward. Because DISK is not guilty. DISK and its affiliated unions have not been involved in any effort other than defending the interests of our working class against the oppression and exploitation of the bosses, extending the trade union right and freedoms, coming out in favour of the independence of our country and the bright future of our peoples, ^{by} making the use of the rights guaranteed by 1961 Constitution. But, in spite of this fact, the prosecutor - whilst stepping back in the face of national and international protest - have demanded prison sentences up to twenty years against DISK leaders.

We should all increase our efforts to stop this demand of the prosecutor which in fact signifies a ~~demand~~ ^{challenge} against every freedom-loving person, an insult to national and international public opinion. Time is running out to put an end to this ~~sham~~ trial.

International and national trade union organisations, the entire

world public opinion in favour of democracy and human rights should now further raise the following demands:

- DISK trial should be stopped
- The assets and funds of DISK and affiliated unions should be returned and the ban on their activities should be lifted
- Freedom for DISK and all of its affiliated unions!

Dear friends and colleagues,

Following the 12th September coup, international trade union organisations - ICFTU, WFTU, World Labour Confederation and ETUC - have showed all-round solidarity with DISK. ETUC decision for DISK's affiliation should be welcomed. Our working class and democratic forces highly esteem all these efforts of solidarity.

The present conditions, however, necessitate further enhancement of the international solidarity. In this direction, we welcome the decisions of the ETUC Executive Committee on 12-13 December 1985. We call on its member organisations to increase their activities along these decisions.

DISK trial has come to the stage of defence statements. ETUC and WFTU have ^{continuously} ~~constructively~~ observed the hearings by sending lawyers and representatives before. The ^{attention} ~~interest~~ shown to DISK trial should now be further increased.

Dear friends and colleagues,

International working class solidarity has played a significant role in keeping up the morale and resolve of our working class to resist the onslaught of the dictatorship. Today the masses are apparently beginning to overcome the silence enforced by the force of bayonets. The efforts spent throughout the past ^{very} ~~open~~ difficult years by class-conscious ^{workers} ~~people~~ trained

in the school of DISK have not been in vain. Our peoples, the working class in particular, are increasing their activities. The recent 10 thousand-strong mass demonstration in Balikesir, which was called by Turk-Is confederation and which was the first of its kind since the time of the military coup, is a proof of this. And in the coming days, this Saturday, probably over a hundred-thousand working people will rally and march in İzmir, on the call of Turk-Is, for freedom, bread, democracy, and jobs, against the terrorist dictatorship of Evren and Ozal. We are convinced that;

~~Further~~ - strengthened by international solidarity and unity of action of broad democratic forces, our working class, the people of Turkey will win. And freedom will dawn on the horizons of our country.

February 19, 1986.

Trade Union Meeting in Support of the Restoration
of Trade Union Freedoms in Turkey, Congress House,
February 18, 1986

Address by Mr. Norman Willis, General Secretary of the TUC

I take great pleasure in welcoming trade union colleagues to Congress House this afternoon. It is particularly pleasing to see friends from Turkey. We are here to discuss ways in which we outside Turkey can help in having the practice of trade union and other basic democratic freedoms restored in Turkey, and I believe that there are several ways in which we can play a constructive part. That is a trade union responsibility; we have to do what is in our power to help working people in Turkey recover what are their inalienable rights.

But we must not forget that many thousands of trade unionists in Turkey are bravely nurturing the spark of trade unionism in the face of repression which is always present and is sometimes brutal. In particular, I want to pay tribute to leaders and members of DISK, established almost exactly nineteen years ago, who have borne the brunt of the ruthless attacks of the Turkish authorities since the military coup in September 1980. Even today four years after trials started 783 DISK representatives face charges which carry sentences of up to twenty years in prison. The cruelty of the treatment of Abdullah Basturk and his colleagues is clearly designed to intimidate all others from standing up for normal rights and entitlements. The example of courage and determination given by the DISK defendants stands as an unshakeable defence against intimidation and repression.

What can we outside Turkey do to help? I do not want to go into detail about all the action being taken by the European Trade Union Confederation, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, and the TUC itself. These activities are a starting point for discussions which I hope will stimulate new action and ideas. But I think it will be helpful to keep in mind as well the formal protestations of the Turkish Government. It has retained Turkish membership of the International Labour Organisation and the Council of Europe - indeed it has shown a strong wish to play a more active role in the Council. The Turkish Prime Minister said yesterday that he hoped that Turkey would in addition be admitted to the European Community in ten years' time. And of course Turkey is a member of NATO. It is an organisation based on a defence treaty but it is supposed to be defending the same democratic freedoms which the ILO, and the Council of Europe, and the European Community proclaim.

I hope that Mr. Ozal gets the message before he returns to Turkey that his Government does not satisfy the conditions of membership of any of these international organisations. The law concerning trade unions does not allow freedom of association; it bans almost all forms of industrial action; it narrowly restricts collective bargaining. The regime is determined to crush DISK and it has resisted all the appeals to it to drop the baseless charges against Mr. Basturk and his colleagues. Not only trade unions are in the regime's sights. The relentless pursuit of representatives of the Peace Association continues and, despite protestations to the contrary, it is clear that torture is still used. At least one of the torturers has admitted it.

The strategic and economic considerations may be enough for some to put these violations of basic human rights aside. But it will not work with the people of Western Europe and it will not work for the governments if the notions of freedom and democracy are to have real meaning.

The General Council deplore the invitation to Mr. Ozal to visit Britain this week, the first time a Turkish head of government has set foot in a Western European country since the military coup. To use Mrs. Thatcher's language, the invitation sent entirely the wrong signal to the regime. The pressure is on Turkey because of its cruel violations of basic rights and it will remain on. And perhaps Mr. Ozal may have good cause to doubt the worth of the seal of respectability given to his Government by a prime minister who herself breached a solemn international commitment by banning trade unions at GCHQ.

We have many instruments at our disposal. The ICFTU has steadfastly maintained representations to the Government and to the ILO. It has provided relief to the DISK defendants and their families throughout the trials. The ETUC, and Bjorn Pettersson will speak for it, has concentrated on the Western European intergovernmental institutions whose support Turkey seeks and needs. The TUC and other national centres have kept up pressures on governments to remind them that the universal principles of human rights to which they subscribe are under vicious and protracted attack in Turkey.

I have no doubt that Turkish working people will win back their rights eventually. We must use our heads as well as our hearts to ensure that we help as far as we can. We look forward to the discussion and ideas which will be put forward this afternoon.

February 19, 1986.

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMA YAKFI
TÜSTAV