

6 Peace News 2 November 1984

## More Turkish peace trials

*Kevin Watkins writes:* On September 27 Turkish martial law authorities issued charges against a further 48 persons in connection with the trial of the Turkish Peace Association (TPA). Last November eighteen members of the Association's founding executive, including its President Mahmut Dikerdem, were sentenced to periods of prison and internal exile of between five and ten years.

Among the defendants in the new peace trial are ten members of the Istanbul Bar Association—all of whom are now prohibited from practising law despite the fact that they have yet to be tried—three leaders of the DISK trade union federation, writers, academics, actors and former MPs. All of them are charged with the unlikely offence of attempting to "overthrow the existing constitutional order" and facilitate "the domination of a social class over other social classes".

Even by the Kafkaesque standards of contemporary Turkish "justice" the Martial Law Prosecutor's case against the TPA is a remarkable one. The TPA, which was a perfectly open and legal body from its inception in 1977 until the coup of 1980, is accused of undermining Turkey's military pact with the United States and questioning Turkey's role as a regional "peacemaker". The TPA's opposition to nuclear weapons and the presence of all foreign military

bases (including US ones in Turkey) and their opposition to all military pacts (including NATO), supposedly threatened "the existing constitutional order". Equally, by calling for the implementation of UN resolutions on regional and international disputes (including those demanding the withdrawal of Turkish troops from northern Cyprus) and the cessation of the Graeco-Turkish arms race, the TPA threatened Turkey's security and international reputation. Despite the facile nature of the evidence the verdict of the state-appointed judges is a foregone conclusion.

Last May, when the country's intelligentsia confronted head-on the claim that the limited electoral contest of November 1983 had restored democracy to Turkey, President Evren swiftly denounced the signatories of the statement as "traitors" and a martial Law Court in Ankara initiated proceedings against fifty-six of them.

By exposing the political realities of post-"election" Turkey, the petitioners threatened to undermine the regime's attempts to gain international respectability and (more to the point) access to EEC aid.

Last May Turkey, principally due to the good-offices of the European conservative parties, was re-admitted to the Parliamentary Assembly of

the Council of Europe. This is despite the fact that there are upwards of 30,000 political prisoners held in appalling conditions in Turkish jails, that reports of torture have continued unabated since the "elections" and that five European countries have a formidable case against Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights.

Apart from being an affront to the European Convention on Human Rights, the new peace trial is a challenge to the European peace movement. In his defence at the original TPA trial Orhan Apaydin pointed out to the judges the absurdity of prosecuting members of an organisation for their opposition to nuclear weapons and militarism. "We are", he went on, "only in favour of peace, democracy and human rights". It is up to the European peace movement to impress upon governments that the human rights and dignity of Turkish citizens are too high a price to pay for the realisation of NATO strategic interests on its supposedly "vulnerable" south-eastern flank.

Funds and contributions of time and energy are urgently needed to publicise the trials of the Turkish Peace Association. Contact: Committee for the Defence of the Turkish Peace Association, 13 Bolton Walk, Andover Estate, London N7 (tel 01-263 4476).

TÜRKİYE SOS

MA VAKFI