

January, 1982

An Appeal to the People of the Free World to
Prevent the Destruction of Democracy and Human
Rights in the Hands of the Military Junta in
Turkey

As you know, Turkey is under the rule of a military Junta since September 12, 1980.

The Junta's justification for this coup d'etat was terrorism, which had almost assumed the proportions of a civil war between radical right and radical left, and the coup was generally approved by the Turkish people, who believed the Junta's promise that they were seizing power only to suppress terrorism, after which the country would return to democracy and civil administration.

However, shortly after seizing power, the Junta proceeded to systematically destroy all of Turkey's democratic institutions and to violate human rights in an unprecedented way.

The Junta, under the guise of a crusade against terrorism, has dissolved the parliament, disbanded all political parties, terminated the freedom of the press, completely destroyed the independence of the judiciary, abolished the autonomy of the universities, revoked all labor rights, and above all, they have disrupted the rule of law and have made a mockery of justice.

Today, together with terrorists, many former targets and victims of terror are in prison; thousands of people who had nothing to do with terrorism, including intellectuals, writers, lawyers, publishers, labor leaders, teachers and a former mayor of Istanbul, are kept in jail, without indictment or court sentence.

The Junta made torture a routine method of investigation, which is used not only to obtain the truth, but also to force its victims to confess to crimes they had not committed, and to intimidate and silence those who oppose the violation of human rights.

Torture is also used on a wide scale to obtain confessions denouncing and incriminating those individuals the secret military police wish to arrest.

The Junta flatly denies the existence of torture, but Amnesty International presented to the Junta the details of more than 20 deaths under torture, selected among 47 known cases, because irrefutable evidence could be provided for them. (Amnesty International's figures do not include about 18 "police executions", which are officially reported as if the victims were killed in shoot-outs with the police).

The Junta's response to Amnesty International's appeal, clearly illustrates their mentality, and a distorted understanding of the concept of torture; in a speech, the head of the Junta attacked and criticized Amnesty International, by asking the rhetorical question "Where was Amnesty International when the terrorists were killing so many people?"

When more than 40,000 people now in prison are finally indicted, they will be tried by courts who have no independence or protection against the arbitrary rule of the Junta; judges and prosecutors who refuse to obey the instructions given by the Junta are demoted and promptly replaced.

Recently, 52 labor union leaders were brought to trial at the military court in Istanbul, after having been kept in prison for 15 months without an indictment. The military prosecutor demands the death penalty for all of them on ideological grounds.

In violation of Turkish laws and of the Declaration of Human Rights, the court declared "emergency war conditions" which are only applicable to deserters, saboteurs and traitors in war, and limited the number of the defense lawyers, denied the defendants the free choice of counsel, expelled four lawyers including the chairman of the Istanbul Bar Association out of the court because of the objections they made.

The court also refused the demand of the defense that the entire proceedings should be recorded officially. As a consequence, the press will be allowed to report only the court-approved portions of the proceedings.

This trial, which will eventually encompass 2,000 individuals and organizations representing the entire labor movement of Turkey, has all the makings of a kangaroo court. In fact, the head of the Junta, in flagrant violation of Turkish laws and of all universal principles of justice, had publicly announced 12 months before the indictment was prepared, that the guilt of these labor leaders would be established when they are tried.

Furthermore, in accordance with a law enacted by the Junta, most of the court sentences are final, without the right of appeal to a higher court.

As a precaution against disclosure of torture in the courts, the Junta recently decreed that the accused can be taken from the courts for further police interrogation. As a result, before the victims of torture appear in court, they are warned by their interrogators that they will be taken back to the torture chamber if they disclose during the hearings that they had been subjected to torture.

In short, the Junta effectively suppressed terrorism, but they replaced it with State Terror, not only against terrorism, but also against justice, democracy and human rights.

History will decide if this coup d'etat was actually caused by terrorism, or if the military had any complicity in the escalation of terrorism, in order to justify this coup.

Indeed, members of the Junta themselves were in charge of the martial law administration with extra ordinary powers since late 1978, during which time they only made a token effort to suppress terrorism.

There are a number of ominous indications that the military may have covertly supported some of the terrorist activities prior to the coup:

- On several occasions (such as the genocide in the town of Maras in 1978) there is conclusive evidence that the civil authorities had warned the military and requested reinforcements before the incident, but no response or help came from the military.
- Some of the weapons captured from the terrorists are official military weapons with special serial numbers. Despite the efforts made by the civil authorities and by the press, the military have refused to disclose to whom these weapons were issued.
- Many terrorists arrested by the police in 1978 and 1979 (such as the murderers of the chief of police of the city of Adana in 1979) were released by the military commanders of the martial law administration. The same terrorists were arrested by the same commanders for the same crimes, after the Junta seized power.
- Many smugglers who were supplying weapons to terrorists were arrested by the police and were turned over to the military authorities before and after the coup. Most of these smugglers, including all of the important gang leaders, were released by the military courts after the coup, and many of them were allowed to leave the country.

The fact that these notorious smugglers were released and allowed to leave the country, at a time when thousands of ordinary citizens including ex-prime ministers are denied exit visas, indicates the possibility that the disclosures they would make at their trials could have embarrassed the military.

When the press questioned the Junta regarding the release of these arms smugglers, the Junta's hypocritical reply was that the courts were "free" and that they had no control over "independent courts".

Not content with the physical subjugation of the nation, the Junta is also determined to deprive the Turkish people of the proponents of justice, democracy and human rights.

Mr. Bulent Ecevit, a former prime minister and chairman of the social democratic Republican People's Party, is sentenced to four months in prison, just because he attempted to exercise his constitutional right for rebuttal against the false accusations directed at him and at his party by the head of the Junta. An illegal ban was issued to the press against the publication of Mr. Ecevit's defense at his trial, and a further ban was issued against disclosing the existence of this ban.

Mr. Ecevit is also under the threat of four 6-year prison terms, accused of "insulting the moral personality of the

government" in his speeches as the leader of opposition during the last four years.

It obviously does not disturb the Junta's sense of justice or logic, that the government whose "moral personality" Mr. Ecevit is supposed to have insulted, is the same government overthrown by the Junta.

We are sure that you are familiar with most of the above facts. But you may not be familiar with the fact that the only support given to this Junta from the western democracies, comes from the U.S.A.

Our European friends who are dedicated to democracy and human rights, not only for the sake of their own people, but also for the people of their allies, and who do not consider democracy and human rights as unnecessary luxuries for the Turkish people, have done all they can to discourage the Junta from destroying justice and democracy in Turkey.

It saddens us to see that the present administration in the U.S. choose to ignore the violation and destruction of the basic principles of human rights in Turkey, probably because of their need for an obedient ally in the Middle East.

We believe that the pressing need for a dependable ally should not blur the sense of justice of the American people, and their dedication to fundamental human rights. We further believe that the distinction the present U.S. administration makes between "Authoritarian" and "Totalitarian" regimes is not only misleading, but also immoral.

For years, Turkey's democratic institutions and the overwhelming majority of the people who tried to preserve parliamentary democracy and human rights, were the targets and victims of terrorism from both right and left. Now, the same institutions and their supporters are under assault by the Junta.

We therefore very much resent the unconditional support the U.S. administration is giving the Junta, and we are convinced that the American people will not tolerate their government's permissive attitude towards them, if they are fully aware of the facts.

Turkish people are determined to preserve parliamentary democracy and human rights in Turkey. Turkish people are also determined to remain a part of the western world and within the western defense alliances with the U.S.A.

Joining this alliance was the will of the Turkish people, because of their conviction that being a part of the western world is the only way Turkey can preserve democracy and a system of government committed to human rights. The U.S., therefore, has no need for puppet governments or military juntas to keep Turkey in this alliance.

However, if the price we have to pay to remain in an alliance with the U.S. amounts to the destruction of our democracy and to the sacrifice of human rights, we would have little reason to remain in that alliance.

If, on the other hand, unconditional support is given to the Junta, and violation of justice and human rights are overlooked, in order to secure from the Junta concessions against the interests or the will of the Turkish people, such an alliance will be no more durable than "a house built upon the sand".

As recent history of the Middle East clearly shows, an alliance with the "Authoritarian" or "Totalitarian" rulers of a country is, at best, a very short-term assurance for a foreign power.

We also hope that the U.S. Government will realize before it is too late, that the grand strategy of the radical left and their terrorists, was for many years, to create the present situation in Turkey, because they believe, perhaps correctly, that they will receive the support of the masses only after the Turkish people live through a period of totalitarian military rule and state terror, and thus lose their confidence in western type of democracy.

We therefore urge supporters of democracy and human rights throughout the world, to try to influence the U.S. administration to abandon their unconditional support of the Junta, before the actions of the Junta, hence the destruction of democracy and human rights in Turkey, are identified with an alliance with the U.S.A.

In order to deliver this letter of appeal to you a group of Turkish people will have risked torture and eight-year prison sentences. The group consists of informed citizens from many professions and represents supporters and members of the two main political parties which account for 90 per cent of the popular vote in Turkey.

We believe that the reasons which prevent the disclosure of our names are painfully obvious and hope that this unfortunate necessity will not overshadow the facts we have presented.

We wish to thank you for any assistance you can give us.

P.S. Because of our limited resources, we are unable to reach most of the opinion-makers of the world.

Please help us by sending copies of our appeal to those who might be interested.