

# WOMEN'S VOICE

for equality  
social progress  
peace



## PWO MUST BE OPENED





# PROGRESSIVE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT CANNOT BE STOPPED

## PROLOGUE



The progressive women in Turkey staged a National Women's March, under the banner of «The Progressive Women's Movement Cannot be Stopped.» This long march, the first of its kind in the history of Turkey, and undoubtedly one of the very few in the world, was organized to protest the ban placed by the Martial Law Authorities on the Progressive Women's Organization, the only mass democratic organization of women in Turkey.

The National Women's March took place in Turkey under increasingly anti-democratic conditions, growing pressures from the imperialist forces and the threat of fascism. It took place at a time when the Republican People's

Party (RPP) in power has retreated far to the right and capitulated to the demands of monopoly capital, the IMF and NATO, in declaring martial law in 17 provinces, in its economic policies aimed at shifting the burden of the deepening crisis on to the shoulders of the working masses, and in the greater and greater abridgement of democratic rights and freedoms.

While openly fascist organizations, the source of the mounting fascist terror in Turkey, are free to organize, the PWO who demands equality, democracy, freedom, peace and social progress, respect for motherhood and the welfare of children, was banned from activity.

The women who rallied with such great determination and self-sacrifice to the defense of the PWO have, in doing so, also demonstrated their unequivocal protest against RPP'S understanding of a «free democracy» which denies democratic rights but lets fascism pass.

This action was anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly, anti-fascist in essence. It will go down in history as the greatest organized action yet of women in Turkey, workers and intellectuals alike, ready to give their lives in the struggle of the masses for democracy.



Editors



# WE MUST ORGANIZE



## 1975

- 60 % of women in Turkey are illiterate. There is no equality in employment or promotion.

- Motherhood is not considered a social function, and does not enjoy the protection of society.

- Inequality before the law can take striking forms: a woman cannot seek employment without the permission of her husband.

- Women get paid less for the same job, with equal qualifications - they are the last to be hired and first to be fired.

- Childcare facilities for the children of working mothers are almost non-existent.

- Peasant women do not enjoy even the minimal rights to education. They are liable to be sold like chattel. For them there is nothing but backbreaking work in the fields and at home.

These are some of the reasons that make it imperative for women to organize separately, to stand up for their rights, and uncover the roots of their double exploitation.



The Progressive Women's Organization was founded on the 3rd of July, 1975, in a worker's district of Istanbul. This was the first mass organization of worker, peasant, intellectual women in Turkey.

The founding of the PWO was part of the rising struggle for peace, democracy, national independence and social progress, both at home and abroad. Women subjected to double exploitation for centuries, could not any longer be spectators in this struggle. «Neither is democracy possible without the participation of women, nor the liberation of women without democracy,» became the battlecry of progressive women who founded the PWO. Henceforth, an organized struggle would be waged for an equal and respected place in society for women, both as workers and mothers.

- PWO participates in marches and demonstrations for peace, independence, and democratic rights and freedoms.

- Literacy courses were organized for women.

- Seminars were organized on the women's question

- PWO launched the 2. Stockholm Appeal in Turkey.

AND WITH THE YEAR 1976, PWO HAD TAKEN ITS UNCONTESTED PLACE IN THE RANKS OF THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY.



# 1976

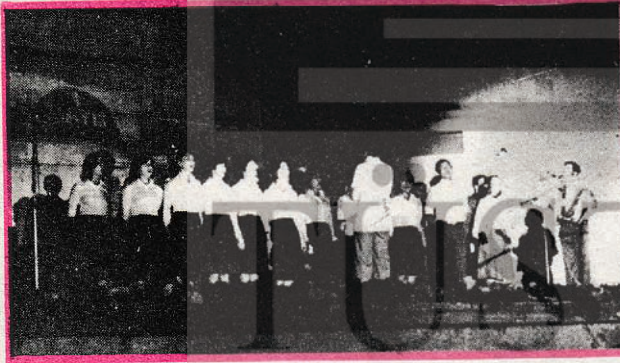
LONG LIVE THE 1st OF  
MAY, THE DAY OF  
STRUGGLE, UNITY AND  
SOLIDARITY OF THE  
WORKING CLASS

THE FASCISTIC ARTICLES  
141-142 OF THE PENAL  
CODE SHOULD BE  
ABOLISHED.  
GREETINGS TO ALL  
WOMEN IN THE  
STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM  
AND EQUALITY, AGAINST  
EXPLOITATION,  
DISCRIMINATION AND  
FASCIST TERROR.

● 8 March 1976. International Women's Day is celebrated for the first time in Turkey by the PWO.



1 May 1976  
● The fifty year old prohibition on May Day celebrations is broken, and PWO participated massively in the May Day demonstrations.



● 1 September 1976.  
The PWO issues a call to other democratic organizations to jointly organize a rally to celebrate World Peace Day. Thus, a new tradition is started in Turkey.

## CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDCARE 15 July 1976



A campaign is launched for «a childcare center in every workplace and every neighborhood.» Thousands of signatures were collected ten thousands of posters and pamphlets distributed all over the country. It was the first time that this issue was being raised publicly in Turkey. Today, all progressive organizations, municipalities, and even the government have been forced to take up the cause.

- February 1976  
PWO starts a petition campaign for retirement benefits for women after 20 years of service.
- PWO calls for a 10 % reduction in arms spending, with the funds to be used for the relief of earthquake victims.
- PWO participates in the actions to protest the anti-democratic State Security Courts, by the side of the working class.
- 23-26 September 1976. PWO members participate in the World Conference to end the Arms Race and for Disarmament and Detende, in Helsinki. They voice the determination of women in Turkey in the struggle for peace.



# 1977

(The rightist coalition government is still in power. Fascist terror is on the rise. Mass actions such as the May Day demonstrations scare the ruling classes. They unleash unprecedented violence on May Day killing 36 people. In the June 5 elections, people go to the polls saying «No to the 'National Front' government.» At the end of the year, the rightist coalition is finally brought down as a result of the concerted actions of the masses. The call for the formation of a United Democratic Front against fascism is raised and starts gaining ground.)

**FORWARD FOR THE JOINT ACTION AND UNITED FRONT OF ALL DEMOCRATIC FORCES AGAINST IMPERIALISM, THE FASCIST THREAT AND THE ASSAULT OF THE MONOPOLIES ON WAGES AND SOCIAL BENEFITS.**

## ● Solidarity with the Metal Workers' Strike.

40,000 metal workers come out on strike against the metal bosses. The strike takes on the proportions of a mass struggle against monopoly capital. National and international solidarity is woven around the strike. PWO members mobilize to raise strike funds. They take up collections, make the rounds of the facto-

## SOCIAL SECURITY DEMANDED FOR CHAR WOMEN

● A petition drive is organized to demand social security rights for char women. A partial victory is gained in an amendment to the Social Security Law.

ries on strike, cooking for the workers, keep the families of the strikers company, and constantly explain the significance of the strike to the masses. The strike becomes a school in working class solidarity for the PWO members.



## PWO MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS

● January 14-16. «The forum of World Peace Forces» in Moscow.

● February 11-16. Meeting of the World Peace Council presidium on «World Public Opinion and the Helsinki Final Act», in Sofia.

● 6-11 May. Meeting of the World Peace Builders in Warsaw.

● PWO celebrates the 8th of March all over the country with rallies, exhibitions and conferences.

● PWO members close ranks on May Day square. The massacre that takes 36 lives does not intimidate them. «On to May 1st, 1979»

## FASCISTS BEWARE MOTHERS ARE COMING



## WOMEN MARCH TO PROTEST FASCIST MURDERS

● February 26, 1977. A silent march of women, calling for an end to the fascist murders, becomes the largest mass demon-

stration of women in the history of the Turkish Republic. The march organized jointly by the PWO and the women's branch of the RPP, underscores the determination of mothers not to let fascism pass



## CAMPAIGN AGAINST HIGH PRICES, UNEMPLOYMENT AND FASCISM

● PWO launches a massive campaign against the soaring prices, wage freezes unemployment and the rising anti-democratic pressures. Hand

bills are distributed by the thousands. Women protest shortages and high prices at press conferences, marches and demonstrations staged in cities and towns all across the country. In places, the demonstrations are held jointly with other democratic organizations.



# 1978

(The Republican Peoples' Party government which takes the place of the rightist coalition, turns its back to the masses. Prices and unemployment continue to rise. Fascist terror mounts. The forces of democracy are determined to forge a united front, and they raise their demands at mass actions.)

THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IS A PROGRESSIVE, DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION LEADING TO SOCIALISM.



- International Women's Day celebrations take place in more than 30 towns and cities, and even in a village. The various activities that lasted for a week, and in which guests from the WIDF, and the women's committees of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Greece participated, were concluded with a women's march, «Forward for our rights, our children and democracy.»



18 November, 1978.

- A joint march with other democratic women's organizations is staged in Istanbul, an important step in building the unity of action of women in the democratic struggle.

- 2 February 1978. Campaign for the enforcement and lengthening of Maternity leaves was launched by the PWO.

- The Campaign for universal childcare is concluded with more than 60,000 signatures being presented to the Parliament.



## A MILESTONE FOR PWO The Second General Congress

The Second General Congress of the PWO is held in Istanbul on the 28 and 29 of May, 1978, with the participation of delegates representing 12,000 members from 23 branches. The Congress stressed once more the determination of the women in the struggle for a world without wars or exploitation.

Among the resolutions adopted unanimously at the Congress, were,

- The recognition of motherhood as a social function.
- The abolition of all anti-democratic, fascist.



and discriminatory articles in the Civil and Penal Codes.

- Continuation of the struggle against the high cost of living, unemployment and poverty.

- Withdrawal from imperialist organizations such as NATO.

- The formation of a National Democratic Front for waging a united struggle for a progressive, democratic society.

- PWO participates massively in the May Day celebrations.

## NO TO THE NEUTRON BOMB

- PWO leads the way in organizing a massive campaign against the Neutron Bomb, upon the call from the Turkish Peace Committee.

- PWO members participate in the Conference for Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean, 9-12 February, Athens.

- PWO participates in demonstrations staged jointly with other democratic organizations against «Fascism, imperialism, chauvinism, high prices and unemployment.» PWO branches organize women's marches in the same vein, many in towns witnessing a woman's demonstration for the very first time. PWO joins the campaign for the disbanding of neo-fascist organizations.





# 1979

(Martial Law is declared in the major provinces in Turkey after the fascists massacre of hundreds of people in Kahramanmaraş. They continue to murder progressives, democrats every day on the streets. The grip of imperialism tightens. The economic crisis created by the monopoly capitalists deepens. The democratic forces undertake joint actions to guard democratic rights and freedoms in the face of the increasingly oppressive policies of the RPP.)



**International Year of the Child.** The PWO takes the lead in the IYC activities organized throughout the country. With PWO initiative, a Working Group of Democratic Organizations for the IYC is formed. The PWO takes an active part in the realization of a National IYC Conference.

## FREE MILK FOR OUR CHILDREN

The PWO launches a campaign demanding free milk for all children under six and pregnant and nursing mothers, in the face of widespread malnutrition due to the deteriorating standard of living.



**8th of March** is celebrated with women's marches and rallies in countless cities, in many places under unfavorable Martial Law conditions.

## FASCISM SHALL NOT PASS

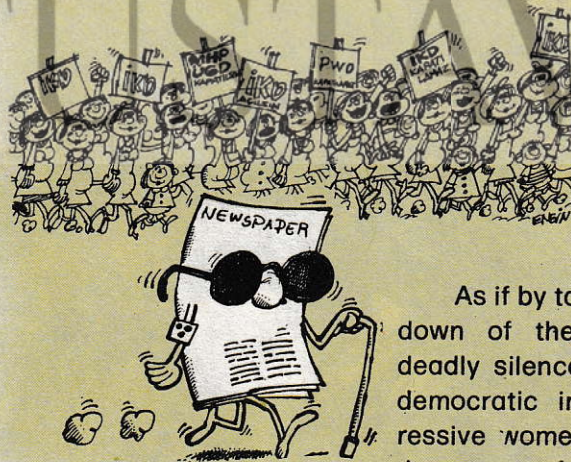
Mass actions organized throughout the country to check the threat of fascism gain momentum. The PWO actively participates in such mass actions.

## MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS

Martial Law bans May Day celebrations in Istanbul. PWO members join the masses in celebrating May Day in Izmir, under the leadership of the working class.

## PWO is banned from activity with no justification

On the 28th of April 1979, the PWO was banned from all activity by the Istanbul Martial Law Command. All 33 branches and 35 local offices of the PWO were put under seal.



As if by tacit agreement, the closing down of the PWO was greeted by deadly silence in the press. Only after democratic initiatives taken by progressive women, do columnists take up the cause of the PWO.





**PWO CANNOT BE SILENCED**







#### THE PWO MARCHING SONG

Fighting brave and fearless  
We hail thee, our PWO  
In the struggle for  
Independence and democracy.

Refrain : Progressive, revolutionary  
All working women  
Hail PWO! Hail PWO!  
You will live on!

Children must not grow in hunger  
They should not be killed unborn  
End the pains the mothers do feel  
As they cry over their children's  
corpses

Refrain :

While education, seeking employment  
At home, at work, everywhere  
End the exploitation and the coercion  
Of all working mothers

Refrain :

Don't remain where darkness reigns  
Prefer to live in a sunny world  
Prefer to be a brave man's widow  
Rather than the coward's wife

Refrain :

Say «Non Passaran!» to fascism  
Let this cruelty you suffer end  
Join the ranks of the PWO  
Take part in the struggle, my Ayşegül!







This groundless and unjustifiable ban drew the reaction of democratic organizations both at home and abroad.

- Messages of protest rained on the Prime Minister from the WIDF, and other sister organizations from all over the world, as well as organizations of Turkish workers, youth and women abroad.

- Thousands of letters were mailed by progressive women all over the country, to Prime Minister Ecevit, to protest the closing down

of their organizations. Women formed long ques in post offices to cable their protests.

- Hundreds of trade-union officials, officers of all mass democratic organizations, writers, artists, faculty members and prominent journalists joined a petition drive for the lifting of the ban on the PWO.

The Martial Law Command of Istanbul repeatedly turned down petitions demanding justification for the closing down of the PWO. They also refused to receive the PWO officers. As a result, the decision to close down the PWO was appealed at the State Court.

# PEACE FRIENDSHIP SOLIDARITY



**we shall  
overcome,  
PWO shall  
live on..!**

#### MARCHING SONG TO ANKARA

Watch those rocks of Ankara  
Watch those tears in my eyes  
PWO has been locked-out  
Watch the grief the mothers bear

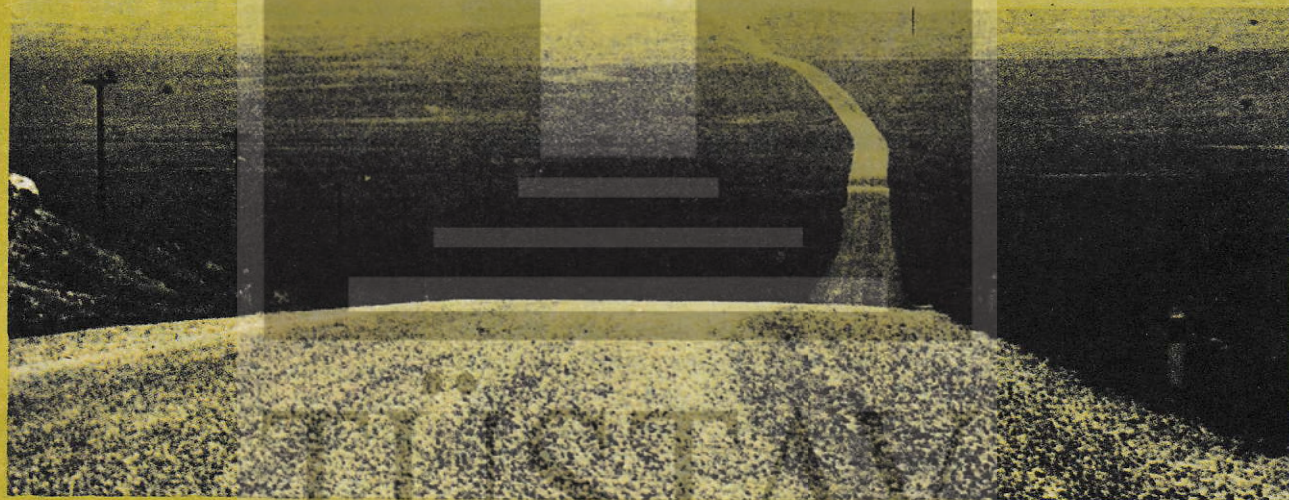
Marching on to Ankara  
Five hundred of us women  
We have a fight to wage  
In the ranks of democracy

Awake, awake ye working women  
Come with us to struggle forth  
Let us unite and organize  
In the ranks of democracy

«Non Passaran!» to fascism we said  
We fought and buried our dead  
Our call was, «Let us unite  
In the ranks of the NDF!»

note : PWO : The Progressive Women's  
Organisation

NDF : The National Democratic  
Front



## **THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S MARCH**

### **July 20-24 1979**

The progressive women would not keep silent in the face of the ban placed on their organization. In spite of the repeated appeals, the Prime Minister and other officials had refused

to meet the PWO executives face to face. PWO members then decided to stage a new type of action: they would march to Ankara, the capital from different cities, to draw public attention to the unjust

ban on the PWO, and to secure an interview with the authorities. The march would also be an occasion for the progressive women once more to voice their demands, and raise the anti-fascist, anti-imperialist struggle.



## PREPERATIONS GET UNDER WAY

An organizing committee for the National Women's March was formed under the leadership of PWO President Beria Onger. As a result of the anti-democratic laws in force, the paper work involved was formidable. Moreover the cost of chartering the buses to accompany the demonstrators, the pure logistic of moving so many women across the Anatolian plain in 4 days, were staggering. However the women were determined. With extraordinary perseverance and patience, all difficulties were overcome. Women sold heirlooms, their bracelets and wedding rings to get together the bus fare. Workers contributed their daily milk rations so their sisters could make yogurt to raise money...

## WE SHALL OVERCOME

The first branch of the National Women's March was off to a start on the 20th of July, 1979, from Izmir, on the Aegean Coast. The second branch started the next day at the Istanbul border, where the Martial Law zone also ends.

500 women participated in the march altogether, bus-loads joining the convoy from various on the way. They were women of all ages and all walks of life. For every woman who was able to come, there were hundreds who were left behind, none the less determined, none the less courageous.

The demonstrators covered a total of nearly 1200 kilome-



*The National Women's March is off to a plant at the Istanbul border July 21 1979  
The rally in izmit*

ters. Meetings and rallies were held in seven cities on the way, with the numbers swelling into the thousands as local women joined the ranks. In other villages and towns, representatives of trade unions, peasant and youth organizations greeted the women with dances, flowers and banners.

The stead-fastness and militancy of these women in the face of all kinds of obstacles, their exemplary morale after marching from rally to rally on the hot melting asphalt, was enough to make everyone proud who witnessed it.

In some towns the marchers were put up in workers' homes. In other places the buses were parked in workers' districts caravan fashion, and the women curled up in their seats for a few hours of sleep. Yet the following evening they would still be dancing folk dances into the late hours, writing new words to old folk-songs, telling of their long march.

People opened their doors,

and hearts to these marchers. mothers and young girls, who were walking so that other mothers could send their children safely to school, so that other young girls could take their place as equals in a free, democratic society, so that children could grow up in a world without wars or exploitation.

## THE PWO SHALL LIVE

Both the morale, courage and discipline of the demonstrators, and the extraordinary sacrifices of ten thousands of women who gave their hands and hearts to make the march possible, were clear proof of the democratic women's movement had taken strong roots in Turkey, and that no amount of anti-democratic measures would be sufficient to suppress it. «PWO is 4 years old, and will keep growing!» became the motto of the march.



## MARCH DRAWS ANTI-FASCIST SOLIDARITY

All along the way, the National Women's March became the focal point of democratic, anti-fascist solidarity. More than 300 messages rained on the organizing committee from trade-unions, youth and peasant organizations, of all different political leanings, as well as organizations from abroad.

Peasant organizations and people's cooperatives contributed provisions, tons of watermelons, heads of cheese and bread. Representatives from many of these organizations spoke at the meetings and rallies held on the way.

An equally important aspect of the march was that in the hottest month of the summer, at a time when mass actions were at an ebb, it mobilized democratic organizations everywhere it went. Once more the importance of mass actions in building up the anti-fascist struggle of the people, was demonstrated. The faith of the masses in their own power, in their own democratic organizations, and in particular the women's movement, was strengthened.

## 22 KILOMETERS TO ANKARA

The demonstration ended on the Ankara provincial border, where the jurisdiction of the Ankara Martial Law Command starts. Banners were furled, streamers taken down from the buses. Henceforth the women would travel on to Ankara, to hear the outcome



At the mass meeting in Eskişehir. The placards read «No to the IMF», «No to NATO», «Fascist organizations must be disbanded», «Day care for our children», «PWO must be opened».



of the interview with Prime Minister Ecevit.

In defiance of their constitutional right to travel, the women were halted at the now famous 22. kilometers from Ankara, at a deserted gas station, without any shade or water. After six hours of negotiations, Ecevit appointed the Minister of Interior to hold an interview with a delegation representing the demonstrators.

While the interview was in progress, two busloads of women who had been allowed to go on to Ankara were rounded up and brought back to join the others. The women were then told to pull out and head back, out of Ankara. They resisted, justly arguing that they at least had the right to wait for the delegation to come back. No amount of threats



President of the Progressive Youth Organization of the Çifteler village presents flowers to PWO president Beria Onger

of intimidation would budge them. Surrounded by the police and soldiers, with guns pointing at them under the glare of headlights, and shivering in the chill night, the women waited, arms locked in a circle. They sung songs, until that too was prohibited. Suddenly they were plunged into dark-



ness, and with gun butts flying, some were bodily hurled into the buses, until the others broke the circle and boarded, to no one would be hurt. The buses were driven to another gas station, outside the Ankara border, where they waited until they were joined by the delegation. Even then, the ordeal was not over. The buses carrying women whose final destination was Ankara, were not allowed to enter the city until late in the afternoon the next day, the 24 th of July.

The unequalled courage these women showed in the face of this totally illegal and unjustifiable harassment, will be an example to all their sisters in struggle.



Women proclaim 'PWO shall live.'

## PRESS COVERAGE OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S MARCH

The National Women's March received wide coverage in the daily press, in both progressive and reactionary daily newspapers. Many columnists took up the cause of the progressive women. The prestigious daily Milliyet pointed out the contradiction between the closing down of the PWO and the



PWO president and other members of the women's delegation with the Minister of Interior, Hasan Fehmi Güneş.

## MARCH REACHES IMMEDIATE GOAL

Securing an interview with Prime Minister Ecevit was in itself one of the goals of the demonstration. So that, when Ecevit appointed the Minister of interior to hold an interview with a delegation of marchers, including the PWO President Beria Onger, this was a victory.

In the interview, the Minister of interior had to concede that there was no legal justification for the closing down of the PWO. Moreover, it was pointed out that the actions of the Martial Law Authorities are binding on the government since it is the government who proclaimed it, and who sup-

ports its continuation, and that the RPP government could not defend this ban neither at home not abroad due to the great respectability that the PWO has won in its four years of existence.

The Minister promised in turn, to intervene with the Martial Law Authorities for a reversal of the ban on the PWO, however ineffective this may be.

It should however be stressed that the only way to halt and turn back such assaults on democratic rights and freedoms is by organized mass actions of the people, and this was amply demonstrated in the interview.

seeming immunity of the fascist organizations which have been exposed as sources of violence. The progressive newspaper Politika printed daily accounts of the march. In its foreign news commentary, it drew attention to the fact that the closing down of a mass democratic organization such as the PWO had focused world democratic opinion on Turkey.

Meanwhile, the unjustifiable, but not unaccountable

silence of the national Radio and Television on this historic march, angered thousands of people daily who rushed to their radios and TV sets to hear some account of it. This silence raised grave doubts as to the independence of the national Radio and TV. The organizing committee voiced its protest of this clearly partisan attitude in a telegram to the Director General of the Turkish Radio and Television Network.



## THE OATH OF WIDF

"... to defend the political, economic, civil and social rights of women, to fight for the establishment of conditions which are indispensable for the harmonious and happy development of our children and future generations, to fight untiringly for the destruction of fascism in whatever form it may appear, and for the establishment of a truly democratic order in every country, to fight untiringly to secure lasting peace in the world..."

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TÜSTAV  
ARŞİVİ  
Zühal Kılıç  
Bağışı





**how come the fascist party is open  
while PWO is banned?**



**because PWO proclaimed job for  
mothers and crech for children!**