



# ilerici kadınlar derneği

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## NEWSLETTER

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### RESISTANCE IN MILITARY PRISONS

In July, over 2500 political prisoners in 4 military prisons in Istanbul started a hunger strike. The prisoners demanded the improvement of the extremely bad prison conditions, the ending of tortures and the persecution of prisoners' families and protested the new death sentences.

The hunger strike which continued for more than a month was the largest of the protest actions undertaken in the military prisons up-to-now. At least 5 persons died and over 30 were hospitalized in a state of coma, but the strike reached its goal in performing a very important function to show the true face of the junta and led to broad repercussions inside the country and abroad. At the same time, it became a focal point in uniting various political movements.

The strike received broad support. Families of prisoners organised for solidarity with their relatives. They sent a group of 350 persons to Ankara, to convey to the junta the demands of the prisoners. The generals retaliated by arresting some of the families as well. But the organised movement of the families played an important role in



making the resistance known to the public opinion. Even the junta was forced to make a statement about it.

Many solidarity actions were organised abroad. In Fed.Germ-any, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, France and other European countries, democrats from Turkey waged hunger strikes, press meetings, demonstrations, signature campaigns and other activities to support the prisoners. Democratic forces of Europe also mobilized in solidarity actions. Many parliamentarians, representatives of various organisations, artists and other personalities sent protest letters to the junta, voiced the matter in their parliaments and organisations, supporting the rightful demands of the prisoners.

This mass protest and the solidarity actions around it, angered the fascist generals to the point of increasing even more their repressions in the jails. Many prisoners were punished by solitary confinement and the screams of tortured prisoners were broadcasted all over the prisons. Hundreds of prisoners were transferred from one jail to another. At their arrival in each new prison, they are subjected to new torture, which the guards call the "beating ceremony". They can only talk with their visiting relatives by telephone. Every time they are taken to a court session, they are stripped of all their clothes and inspected totally naked. Their personal properties are confiscated. Pouring water over the prisoners beds is a pastime for the guards. Some prisoners are totally deprived of the possibility of coming to the prison yard.

Prisoners in the military jails are resisting even at the cost of death. Solidarity is extremely vital for their fight. What sort of solidarity actions can be undertaken is numerous, but here are some examples from actions undertaken in various countries: applying to governments to stop all aid to the generals in Turkey, and to take the matter to the European Council, the EEC and other international organisations; publicising the situation of Turkish prisons; sending observers to Turkey to inquire into the conditions in military prisons; collecting material aid to the prisoners.

## FROM REHA İSVAN'S DEFENCE

The Peace Committee leaders started to make their defence at the military court where they are on trial last July. The tribunal is showing every effort to keep their voice from reaching the public opinion. Claiming that "wartime conditions" applied to the trial, the defences were restricted to one and a half hours.

In her defence, Peace Committee leader and İKD member Reha İsvan compared their position with that of her father, who was a hero of the National Liberation War back in the 1920's. The then ruling Ottoman government, who collaborated with the imperialist forces which occupied the country, had denounced Reha İsvan's father Kemal Doğan as a "traitor" to the country, because he was fighting together with Atatürk for national liberation.

Reha İsvan continued as follows: "There might be some who think that sentencing us is for the good of the country and the people. But the important thing is justice. Conceptions with regard to events, people, organisations can change, but the fact that justice should form the basis of a state cannot change. The fact that if a shadow is cast over justice, even the strongest states will shake from their foundations cannot change.

The sentence which you will pass will not concern our freedom alone, or the honour of our organisation. It will be a decision much more important, with a much more broader scope than these. Do we as a society adopt democracy, the democratic approach, or don't we? Not only our people, but the world public opinion expects from you the reply to this question."

Reha İsvan who is being tried for defending peace has been working in the women movement for long years. She is also the member of such international women organisations as the Soroptimists and the Associated Country Women of the World. In addition to her profession as an agriculturalist, she has worked as a teacher and held the post of Assistant Head of the National Education Board in Istanbul.



## GENERALS GET HYSTERICAL

The fascist generals in Turkey are overreaching themselves these days in increasing their repressions. They are even intolerant of various forces who supported them.

In August, they have vetoed a new large group of the founding members of new parties in Turkey, thus depriving the conservative Doğru Yol Partisi and the Social Democrat Party (SODEP) of the possibility of participating in the elections scheduled for November. Among the vetoed SODEP founders were the 81 year old former secretary of Atatürk. Therefore, if the elections will be held, only 3 parties founded by the approval and the lackeys of the junta will take part in it.

A very interesting letter published by "The Times" shows how broad the opposition to the junta is getting. The letter was written by 16 former parliamentarians from the now-banned Justice and the Republican People's parties, who are in detention at a military camp in Çanakkale. They included former conservative prime minister Süleyman Demirel. Their joint memorandum smuggled out from the camp calls the coming elections as a "farce" and states that the people will only be choosing between the persons elected by the junta. The former parliamentarians also ask the Western countries to stop their support to the military regime and express their doubt as to whether Turkey will still remain an ally of the West when it goes back to democracy if this support is continued.

The junta banned recently also two daily papers, "Tercüman" and "Milliyet". The two papers had staunchly supported the junta ever since it seized power. The reason for the prohibition were articles in both papers that argued in favour of permission to the above-men-

tioned two parties to take part in the elections.

In the meanwhile the junta has adopted new acts concerning organisations and the freedom of press which contain such reactionary articles that even some of the members of the Consultative Assembly, who prepared the junta's constitution, objected to them. Another new decree abolished the autonomy of professional unions such as the Bar Association, Union of Turkish Physicians, Union of the Chambers of Engineers and Architects, and brought them directly under the control of ministries.

These last moves by the junta were criticised by even some conservative and liberal circles in Europe, who had until now refrained from denouncing the military regime. In an article titled "Turkey - a lost opportunity", the British "Financial Times" stated that the aim of the generals seemed not so much to return to democracy as to continue their own rule. The European Council will discuss Turkey's membership to the Council in September and it is reported that there is a growing tendency against the continuation of this membership. The West German social democrats have demanded the Bonn government to stop all aid to the junta.

The fascist generals are losing ground on all fronts. The economy is stuck in the mud. Even international imperialist finance organisations have started to admit the bankruptcy of the "Turkish miracle", praised to the skies until recently. Inside the country, the support to the junta is rapidly diminishing. Furthermore, the shaking Pinochet regime in Chili and the unstable positions of other fascist and reactionary regimes in Latin America is a nightmare for the junta, who sees its unavoidable future in their situation.

The foremost task for all patriots in Turkey now is to raise the united struggle to abolish the fascist regime.



## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE DEMOLISHED

In order to condition young minds to the fascist regime which it wants to institutionalize in Turkey, the junta has turned all higher educational and scientific establishments in the country upside down. Known fascists have been appointed as deans of universities. The freedom of teaching and research have been abolished. Hundreds of professors have been fired from their jobs because they were democratic or just because they were honest scientists. Recently, massive lay offs started in institutions educating teachers. In many faculties education has come to a standstill because the expert cadres have been fired. Among the latest victims is the prominent woman writer and teacher, Afet Ilgaz.

## WOMEN IN THE JUNTA PARTIES

There is no need really to state that the 3 parties which the junta permitted to enter the elections in Turkey have not a single article in their programs concerning women's rights. But there are some women in secondary positions in these parties. Journalists keep asking these "ladies" questions regarding women, whenever they appear in public. Obviously, the ladies themselves have not given much thought to the problem. Here are some of their replies: Münevver Albayrak, an executive committee member of Anavatan Party's İzmir section says that "there is not such a big difference between women and men as there was before. Women can also deal in politics in their spare time, without neglecting their housework". She says that her favourite women politician is Margaret Thatcher. The British prime minister is also a favourite with Işıl Saygın, from the Nationalist Democracy Party. Neriman Elgin from the People's Party, who is the daughter of a former MP, says she is a devout Atatürkist, because "Atatürk played children's games" with her when she was a child. Elgin says that raising 4 children was no problem for her as she had "countless helpers". She is in favour of putting peasant women's problems before those of urban women, "who have so many opportunities, can find work, are more liberated."

## UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG WOMEN

A recent research by the weekly magazine "Nokta", which was also banned for several weeks by the junta, proves that unemployment is increasing faster among women in Turkey. The research states that the ratio of women who come under social security coverage to men was 13% in 1955, but only 10% in 1981. Also, while women constituted 12% of all members of the Social Security Institution in 1965, this ratio dropped to 9% in 1981.

As women working in agriculture do not come into the social security system, these figures represent the decrease of women working in the industry. In Turkey also women are concentrated in such industries as textile and foodstuffs. In the last years, many small and medium sized enterprises in these branches have gone bankrupt. On the other hand, the rapidly rising unemployment results with more men working in the even traditionally so-called "women jobs".

Women are the first to be laid off, both because they are the least qualified workers, and also their wages are considered as an "additional income" for the family. Furthermore, women's unemployment is not reflected in the statistics, because unemployed women are considered "housewives".

Many inquiries prove that in our country also, women's working outside her home is an important factor towards improving their positions in the family and in society. Women with economic independence also acquire a larger say in family affairs and participate more in social activities. The increasing unemployment has a converse impact. The families get poorer by losing the women's wages and the women get back into the four walls of their home. Thus, unemployment is both retarding women's struggle for their liberation and also helping the reactionary forces whose main aim is to constrict as much as possible the mass struggle against them.



## FACTS AND FIGURES (from Turkey under the junta)

The crisis of the Turkish economy is getting deeper thanks to the policies of the junta. This is reflected in the basic criteria.

- The national income per capita has gone back to the 1977 level, dropping under 1000 dollars per year. Thus Turkey is now again counted among the underdeveloped countries. On the other hand, the inflation rate has reached up to 40%. The growth rate for the national economy is about 2.9%, far below the planned level.
- Even reactionary press had to admit the increasing poverty of the working people. According to a research by one newspaper, real wages decreased by 34% in the last 10 years. It is reported that average daily wages increased 15 times between 1972-1982, while the increase in prices was 24 times. Thus, the real daily wage which stood at 43.90 Turkish liras in 1972 was only 29 TL in 1982. Just in 1982, the percentage of decrease in the real wages was 4.2.
- Unemployment is also rising rapidly. In July, the State Planning Department announced that one out of every 3 persons in the working age was unemployed. Unemployment is one of the main reasons behind the unprecedented number of suicides. Such reports are met more and more often in the daily press: "Mesut Güler from Eskişehir, 24, married and with one child, threw himself from a 60 m. water tower, in exasperation after being unemployed for 5 months."
- Not everyone in Turkey is getting poorer. There are also some who get more and more rich every day. According to daily "Milliyet", 2 of the world's richest 64 bankers are Turkish. One of them, Mehmet Emin Karamahmet, owns 3 banks. His family has assets of 100 million dollars. The Çukurova monopoly group, where he is the largest share-holder, is estimated to have a wealth of at least 540 million dollars. The second banker is Erol Sabancı, whose family assets are also over 100 million dollars and his bank, Akbank, is worth over 5.3 billion.