

**COMMUNIST PARTY OF TURKEY**



**ON CURRENT DOMESTIC and  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**



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# FOREWORD

This selection is a compilation of the articles and interviews penned by the TKP General Secretary and central committee members and published recently in the international arena. The selection also includes statements by the TKP Central Committee that were drafted and released for national and international circulation. The article “Turkey and the Socialist Revolution: Are We Chasing a Dream?” has not been published before and is being presented to readers for the first time with this selection.

The selection covers the topics ranging from TKP’s analysis on the character of Turkey’s foreign policy to the process of NATO’s enlargement, from the earthquake of 6th of February to the presidential and parliamentary elections that took place in Turkey in May 2023. Contributions by TKP on the world communist movement and the ongoing debates on socialism and democracy within the communist movement are present in the selection as well.

We hope that this will be a useful resource for our friends who would like to better understand the political and ideological position of TKP. As an output of the TKP’s humble contribution to the strengthening of the idea of communism worldwide, we present it for the first time to the participants of the 23rd IMCWP, which is hosted by the TKP in Izmir.

# TURKEY and the SOCIALIST REVOLUTION: ARE WE CHASING a DREAM?

Kemal Okuyan, TKP General Secretary  
October 2023



The question “Do you really believe in revolution?” is probably not asked only to Turkish communists.

It has been 32 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union. We labeled the 20th century the era of transition from capitalism to socialism. In the last decade of that century and in the period that followed, we did not encounter even a single example that could mean “transition

to socialism”. Class struggles continued and sometimes took very sharp forms in some countries; streets, factories, poor neighbourhoods were mobilised; there were exciting developments in Latin America; but when we look at the whole picture, there has not been a socialist breakthrough to which billions of people in the world who suffer from the current system turn with hope.

Therefore, the question “Do you really believe in revolution and socialism?” is a perfectly legitimate question, unless it is the product of the cynical insinuation of a liberal or a renegade.

What is even more interesting is that communists from different countries have started to ask this question to each other. I can say that I have personally received this question several times.

“Do you really think there will be a socialist revolution in Turkey?”

The emphasis on Turkey is undoubtedly important here. This question means, “Why do you pursue a goal that may be possible elsewhere, but impossible in Turkey as your main strategy?”

After all, Turkey is a NATO member that has been an outpost of the USA for years. It is a conservative society, which increases the degree of difficulty for socialism, on top of the serious weight of political Islam. We are talking about a system that has made a habit of suppressing the revolutionary movement through military coups, political murders and massacres. Despite all its efforts, the communist party cannot even reach 1 percent of the votes in the elections.

In such a country, why does TKP not set more realistic goals, but insistently talks about the actuality of the socialist revolution?

I will try to answer this question, but first I will make a moral point which I think is at least as valuable as a theoretical and political explanation.

“Do we seem like liars or hypocrites?...”

When working people in our own country ask us, with good intentions, whether we believe in revolution, we answer them with this counter-question.

This is extremely important because, in our opinion, if we did not believe in the actuality of the socialist revolution, the communist party would have become redundant. As we always say, the struggle for peace, for democracy, for human rights is very important, but there is no need for a communist party or to be a communist only for these.

Yes, we do believe in socialist revolution. Or we do believe in the socialist revolution in Turkey.

There is a moral aspect to it, but that’s not all.

Let us first talk a little about the objective conditions. When the Turkish Republic was first founded, one of the problems of our country

was the underdevelopment of capitalism. The working class was small in number, and although we were next to Soviet Russia, the material conditions for an organisation that would bring the war of liberation against imperialist occupation to socialism were very weak. It was almost impossible for the communists to become the hegemonic force in the 1920s, despite their rapidly growing popularity in Anatolia.

However, for a long time now, the main problem of Turkey has become the capitalism itself. In other words, the problem is no longer that capitalism is not developing, but that it has developed too much.

It is absurd to consider Turkey as a backward country, especially to place Turkey in a position between the third and second group in that triadic classification which sometimes caused serious mistakes in the Comintern.

In any case, it is now more useful to avoid such classifications. Capitalism has ruled the world for too long. Yes, we can still use the adjective “backward” for some countries, but we cannot evaluate the world with the criteria of the 1930s. As for Turkey, certainly never...

There are enough proletarians in Turkey to lead a revolutionary transformation. We can say that the working classes have a balanced

structure in terms of manual and mental labour and in terms of basic sectors.

Turkey has left behind a serious industrialisation process and has an infrastructure that cannot be underestimated. In addition to the deep-rooted problems stemming from capitalism, the Turkish economy, which has self-sufficient resources in agriculture, has only one problem of energy dependency. Nevertheless, it is a fact that there are resources that can reduce the severity of this problem which are not being utilised today.

Therefore, from a purely objective point of view, Turkey has the class base necessary for a revolution and the material and human resources necessary for a socialist foundation.

And Turkey is an extremely unstable country. Stability is a relative concept. But we know that stability is a great guarantee for the bourgeoisie in the capitalist world. Economic and political stability means the continuation of the ability of capital to rule the working people. In this sense, the bourgeois dictatorship in Turkey has no chance. The country is built on fault lines that cannot be repaired economically, politically and ideologically.

In this sense, it would be highly misleading to

reduce Turkey solely to a strong state and a society shaped by religion.

In Turkey, serious social contradictions and partisanship, which also affect the state itself, have never been absent.

We know that socialist revolutions do not arise from the labour-capital contradiction in the simple sense. Moreover, no revolutionary upsurge bears a “socialist” character from the very beginning. The underlying cause is of course always class contradictions, but they are triggered either by a war, a major legal scandal or corruption. Sometimes a political murder leads to the opposite result and a popular movement emerges while the rulers would never expect.

Turkey is a country that always bears surprises in this respect. The possibility of sudden developments, often unpleasant but sometimes exciting and hopeful, is of course a possibility from a revolutionary perspective.

We can easily say that Turkey, with its population, economy, proletariat, intellectuals, geographical position and of course its endless contradictions, is objectively prone to a revolutionary upheaval.

Maybe this concept has been forgotten, but Turkey is one of the weak links in the

imperialist chain.

Then, we can move on to answering the question “whether we believe in socialist revolution in Turkey” in terms of the subjective factor.

From our point of view, the main issue is simply this: In the case of a revolutionary upsurge in Turkey, what should we be doing today in order not to miss such a historical opportunity?

Firstly, it is necessary to avoid the fantasy that revolutions can be the result of the linear growth of the working class movement and its vanguard, the communists. This is a fantasy because it is based on the assumption that the struggle for socialism consists of successive and predictable steps.

In reality, however, the struggle for socialism means preparing with a realistic and revolutionary perspective for sudden developments that cannot be known in advance. We cannot predict the developments in all their dimensions in advance, but we can determine at which points the contradictions will accumulate in each country, which sections of the society have which ideological-political sensitivities and we can position ourselves accordingly.



The indispensable thing here is to organise and take root in the working class. However, we should be careful to ensure that so-called organisation and rooting does not have the character of binding the masses of workers to the status quo, as we saw most tragically in Germany before 1914.

This is not as easy as it seems. It should be very clear that the ongoing struggles and organisations around the current needs and demands of the working class, especially wages, do not necessarily mean a school for revolution. On the contrary, we have painfully seen in more than one example that current gains can in fact immobilise both the working masses and its vanguard party in the conditions of a revolutionary objectivity.

Communist parties should not enter a conjuncture in which the revolution is on the rise with burdens that will make it cumbersome. Although TKP attaches great importance to electoral success and the strength in the trade union, it acts without forgetting the fact that the positions obtained here, when the necessary ideological-political rigour is not shown, bind the workers' movement (often without being aware of it) to the system.

We do not act with the simplicity of hiding behind the Bolshevik experiment. It is true

that the Bolsheviks increased their influence from the end of 1916 to October 1917 with a speed that no one expected. In this sense the proposition "the Bolsheviks were also a small party..." is of course based on a historical fact. However, as long as it stands alone, this proposition leads us into error. Smallness and greatness are relative concepts. The Bolsheviks were rapidly increasing their influence not only in 1917 but also before the beginning of the war. Not to mention the tremendous political and organisational work after 1903, with its ups and downs.

Therefore, to remain inactive for years and say "the Bolsheviks were small" is self-deception.

But this is also a fact: The Bolsheviks never tested themselves within the institutions of the existing social system. They had their own criteria. Some elements of the preparatory period have been very prominent in historiography, others have been downplayed. But we know that while all other political movements were concerned with "small" calculations in the "big" world of the bourgeoisie, the Bolshevik Party had its own agenda, and in this sense they were playing a "game" that looked childish from the outside.

Then that great politics rolled into the dustbin of history, it became apparent that the Bolsheviks were not playing a game, on the



TKP General Secretary Kemal Okuyan is on the stage in mass electoral event, "We are telling everything about TKP", Ankara, April 9, 2023



contrary, they attempted a very big job and succeeded.

The TKP has no intention of imitating the Bolsheviks. But it is important for us to understand the Bolsheviks and the successful or near successful examples that came after them.

The revolutionary movement in Turkey has no chance of achieving success by making one two, two three, with a linear growth, with an arithmetical increase. Despite its conservative appearance, Turkey is a country where political and ideological balances can change very, very quickly. In this country, what is more valuable than numbers and quantities is to settle at the right points of intervention and make interventions in the right direction.

TKP is striving for this.

Undoubtedly, TKP feels the pressure of the criteria of success that is valid in bourgeois politics, under conditions in which a revolutionary uprising does not make itself felt at all and the broad masses are far from the political and ideological energy necessary to change this social order. There is a very well-intentioned expectation among those who appeal to us for the sake of popularity, visibility, parliamentary representation and for the expectation that we could exist on the

same plane with bourgeois politics. They want to see concretely the success of the party they believe in and embrace.

The problem here is not only the possibility that bourgeois institutions, if not vigilant enough, can lead a communist party away from revolutionary values. What is more dangerous is the possibility that a communist party that begins to appeal to the average expectation in society will be determined by that average and take on an ideological and political character in accordance with it.

It is important to remember that each country has a different political climate in this respect. In Turkey, where class consciousness follows an extremely fluctuating course, we must not forget that only a very limited section of the working class has a permanent, unchanging revolutionary position. Knowing that early massification processes can harm our historical missions does not mean being afraid of organising and growing. But we can still say that we can make adjustments by utilising the accumulation of Marxism-Leninism to determine the most appropriate scale according to the situation of social dynamics.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about those who put the “democratic revolution” or a democratisation process that will be spread over a long period of time as a revolutionary



stage before the socialist revolution in Turkey.

The debate on “national democratic revolution” and “socialist revolution” had been the most important issue in the Turkish left for almost the entire 1960s and 70s. The trivialisation of this debate over time was the result of a significant part of the left explicitly or implicitly abandoning the idea of “revolution”. Today, there are very few people in Turkey who openly pursue a strategy of “democratic revolution”.

TKP defended the “socialist revolution strategy” very decisively in these debates. We have defended for years that labelling the perspective of socialist revolution with “Trotskyism” ultimately means servicing Trotskyism. In fact, as a party “representing the Stalin tradition”, this position of ours was considered quite interesting until recently.

As I said, nowadays this debate has lost its former importance. But the idea that Turkey must first achieve “democracy” has never changed.

There are also those who think that Turkey must be “independent” before socialism.

We know that those who say democracy first often appeal to Lenin. I don’t want to go into details here, but the following is forgotten:

Lenin’s writings on the “democratic revolution” were written when bourgeois revolutions were still an objective reality in Russia and in many other countries. As an objective fact, independent from the strategy of the Bolsheviks, bourgeois revolutions were a reality.

This period is completely closed. In Lenin’s thought, the strategic task of building bourgeois democracy had never existed, but the processes of bourgeois revolution complicated the issue and the labour movement had to relate to these processes. After the period of bourgeois revolutions has closed, the relation of the communist parties to the building of democracy can only be considered in the context of socialist democracy.

The idea of an independent Turkey prioritising socialism poses an even bigger problem. The demand for independence in Turkey has always been on the agenda of communists. TKP not only emphasised the difference between working class patriotism and nationalism, but also made theoretical interventions that deepened this difference.

However, in today’s world, under capitalism, it is not possible for a country to be “independent”. By “independent”, of course, we do not mean “isolated”. “Independence”

is the ability of a country to determine its political, economic and cultural preferences and decisions in line with its own internal dynamics. In this sense, independence should be considered together with the concept of sovereignty.

While the domination of the international monopolies prevails, all capitalist countries produce dependence on this international system, and this is in fact an all-encompassing dependence. It is obvious that the goal of becoming “independent” without overthrowing capitalism will serve no other purpose than for that country to climb up the imperialist hierarchy. It is unthinkable for communists to be part of such a goal.

What remains is the idea of Turkey’s democratisation, if not a revolutionary stage. For a while this was identified with Turkey’s membership of the European Union. TKP opposed this idea very strongly, almost alone on the left. “We know what the EU is, but even the freedoms within the EU are very valuable for us,” the liberal leftists were saying.

What they did not get was that there was no better, or more tolerant capitalist class in Europe. The continent was characterised by strong democratic mass movements and the historical emergence of the working class. Add to this the privileged position of the main

European countries in the imperialist system, and it was not surprising that the working masses enjoyed relatively greater rights.

However, recent history has shown how fragile these rights are. The slightest hitch in the bourgeoisie’s ability to rule and the deepening of the economic crises would shatter all the gilding of “European democracy”. It is natural that the first thing that comes to mind is German fascism, but we all know that Germany of 1933-45 is only a chapter in a bloody history.

Today, the bourgeois democracies in North America and Europe are the countries where bourgeois dictatorships have been the most fortified. Not only because they use the carrot well; but in these countries the stick in the hands of the capitalist class is also very strong.

Those who think that the transition from the carrot to the stick is the product of the excesses of communists or other revolutionaries are seriously mistaken. It is akin to attributing Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 to the “left” policies of the KPD. Of course, the KPD can be criticised not because it acted with revolutionary aims, but because it was not sufficiently prepared and could not be effective.

Fascism is anti-communism in any case, and in this sense every revolutionary upsurge

carries the risk of a counter-revolution within. However, a tangible threat of socialism is not at all necessary for the bourgeoisie to restrict freedoms. Phenomena such as increased repression, wars and fascism are the product of the crisis dynamics of capitalism. In this context, in order to manage social discontent (even in the absence of a revolutionary tendency), it is possible for them to narrow the scope of bourgeois democracy, or even to want to abolish it altogether.

In any case, communists cannot act with the strategy of not frightening the bourgeoisie! Timing, not making early and empty moves, calculating the balance of forces well are important, but we will not give up the revolution to save “democracy”.

In any case, a revolutionary upsurge cannot be our strategic choice. It is an objective fact. It is our choice and duty to carry that rise to socialism. Avoiding this mission means not only missing a historical opportunity, but it can also mean paving the way for fascism.

TKP rejects the approach “let democracy come to Turkey first”. Which democracy? What is democracy? We retain the right to ask questions such as these. And more importantly, we think that the struggle for democracy will only have meaning when it is dependent on the goal of socialism and

is an extension of it. We never give up our thesis that a developed and stable “bourgeois democracy” will not serve the liberation of Turkey from the hell of capitalism, on the contrary, it will make the capitalist system more fortified.

Fortunately, this is impossible. Fortunately, the barbarism called capitalism cannot normalise in Turkey and it is constantly in trouble.

This is our approach. Therefore, comrades, do not ask us “Do you really believe in the socialist revolution in Turkey?”. The question “What are you doing today for the socialist revolution?” will excite us more, and we will learn more from each other in the discussions we will have on this axis.





# 10th of SEPTEMBER MEANS MORE THAN a FOUNDATION DATE for TKP

**Kemal Okuyan, TKP General Secretary**  
**September 2023**

Communist Party of Turkey, our party, was founded on 10th of September, 1920. We are the oldest party in Turkey.

Is it because we are 103 years old?

No, it is not our age that makes us rooted. We are the most rooted party in Turkey because we are a party born to the process of liberation and foundation in these lands.

10 September is a foundation that takes its courage and legitimacy from a rising revolution, from the historical developments that turned the world and our region upside down.

We say 10th of September, 1920, but that foundation is also dates to 7th of November, 1917, the Great October Russian Socialist Revolution; March 1919, when the Communist International took off; the Baku Congress of the Eastern Peoples, which convened on 31st of August, 1920, and



The book "Party History" by TKP Research Group on Party History, cover design by Levent Karaoğlu

instilled optimism in millions for a week.

Baku was a hotbed of labour in the Caucasus. For decades, the anger of the oppressed 'neftçi's (oil workers), exploited by the big monopolies that had been squatting on the rich oil resources, had met with revolutionary ideas, and Baku had become the most critical city in the region in terms of class struggles.

In Baku there were workers from all nations and ethnicities, the brotherhood and internationalism of the proletariat against the cosmopolitanism of capital!

It was in Baku that the party announced its foundation. In Baku, which the Soviet power had liberated from the British-Menshevik alliance and the Ottoman pashas who were still seeking expansion.

TKP could have been founded in Istanbul, where communists defied oppression, darkness and occupation, or in Crimea, where revolution and counter-revolution were engaged in a bloody showdown.

The important thing was this: An era was closing and a new one was opening. The ranks were becoming clearer, revolution and counter-revolution were leading to a confrontation from which no one could escape.

What were the communists to do?

The Ottoman Empire was finished, exhausted. The palace was a nest for despots and collaborators. Occupation and disintegration had broken the necks of the poor Anatolian peasants, who were already broken by hunger, poverty, epidemics and war.

On the other hand, the great war waged by the imperialists to redivide the world and in which the hands of peoples were at each other's throats gave a completely different result; the soldiers, most of whom were workers and peasants, revolted against their own governments, and the workers seized power in Russia, which took the lead in this matter.

The same thing was almost happening in Germany. The German Empire, on the defeated side of the war, gave way to the Republic. The Republic was established in Germany with the bayonet of revolutionary sailors and by force of proletarian militiamen in red bandanas. It was the traitorous German social democracy who prevented it from becoming a socialist republic.

Finland, Hungary, Slovakia... Everywhere the wind of revolution was blowing, everywhere...

On the one hand, the victorious imperialist states were trying to divide their gains among themselves, and on the other hand, they were concerned with ousting the uprising of the reds, the rabble, the oppressed, the great

humanity, the troublemakers who shook their power.

Psychological superiority was on the revolutionary front. Soviet Russia extended a strong hand to the workers and oppressed peoples of the world. This clean, honest and sincere hand was a saviour for the poor masses who had felt the bloody and dirty hand of imperialist barbarism on their throats for years.

The resistance in Anatolia emerged under these conditions.

Turkey had not had a strong tradition of democratic mass movements. In the Ottoman Empire, bourgeois revolutionaries taking advantage of the responses created by the discontent of the poor people were forcing the transformation. Intellectuals, pashas...

Of course, there was a popular reaction against the imperialist occupation. But it was weak and localised. Anatolia was waiting for someone.

Mustafa Kemal was one of those who stood out. In a short time, he distinguished himself from the others by his realism, his courage on fundamental issues and his appreciation of the opportunities and excitement created by Soviet Russia.

The occupation and the decay of the Ottoman Empire had provided new energy for Turkey's



Illustration of Mustafa Suphi, the founding leader of TKP, by Ömer Koçağ

bourgeois revolution. Did the Turkish working class have enough experience and power to go further?

No definite answer can be given to this question. But if we take into account that Thessaloniki, the most organised city of the “old” Ottoman Empire, was in Greece, and Istanbul and Izmir were under occupation; if we consider that socialist thought was not rooted, and that it existed in an inadequate and often incoherent form...

It was tough, very tough.

But even in that situation, the resistance in Anatolia was very, very valuable. First of all, the National Struggle was in the ranks of the international revolutionary front. It was disrupting the plans of imperialism and inspiring many nations.

Moreover, the limits of any struggle cannot be predetermined, some processes can evolve and transform far beyond the point where they started. In 1919, no one could make prophetic predictions about the outcome of the struggle in Anatolia.

A struggle was going on, this struggle was between revolution and counter-revolution, but each front had its own internal dynamics at work.

And even in that state, we are talking about

a revolutionary, progressive process, a revolution.

The Communist Party of Turkey had to be founded!

Because the Communist Party of Turkey has already taken sides in Anatolia. Communist Party of Turkey was against the invaders, against the collaborator rotten Palace, was on the side of the revolution, was on the side of the resistance. Whatever was necessary for that revolution, that resistance to reach more, for the workers to enter the next phase stronger, had to be done.

Communist Party of Turkey was a historical claim, it was going to be established anyway. However, the Communist Party of Turkey was also the spirit of the era; in this sense, its foundation is timely.

The fact that our founding cadres, Mustafa Suphi being in the first place, wanted to move to Anatolia immediately was also in line with the spirit of that era, it was timely.

They underestimated the power of anti-communism, made a miscalculation, did not heed the warnings; they marched to their death...

Let's skip all this...

We communists defend life, not death. But sometimes death writes the history of humanity.

As soon as the TKP was founded, it acted decisively to take a position and assume responsibility in the struggle in Anatolia. If TKP had not done this and observed the resistance, liberation and foundation from the outside, 10 September 1920 would have lost its meaning and remained symbolic.

And if this had been the case, we would have had difficulty in saying “Our party belongs to our country”, when we brought back the name TKP, which was banned by the capitalist class of Turkey, into the field of legal politics in the early 2000s and presented it to the working class of Turkey. Our voice would not have been so loud.

With the strength we derived partly from our founding dynamics, we have largely negated the accusation of “having roots outside” in twenty years. “Belonging to this country” was one of the principles that our party, our movement that brought our party into existence, determined and prioritized. Serving the interests of other countries, whatever they may be, is for us a crime we cannot accept. Our interlocutors for

revolutionary solidarity all over the world are the working peoples of the world and the revolutionaries and communists of other countries. Complaining about our country to other states, asking for help from them; can only be a source of shame for us.

We want to liberate our country from capitalism and all its extensions. We want to destroy this system because we love our country very much. To put it the other way round, we love this country very much because we will overthrow this system and build a new country.

We all know that communism, which we define as a social order freed from classes and exploitation, also means a world without borders. Communism is a system where everyone lives freely and fraternally, where poverty, hunger, unemployment and wars are completely eliminated.

We have a long way to go, or more precisely, a difficult period of struggle is opening in front of us for humanity to reach this point.

The good part is that Turkey will enter this path before many other countries in the world. Yes, we think so. It will take time for humanity to completely get





Anatolian people, "This is how we achieved the republic", 1933



rid of the exploiting classes, capitalism that produces inequality on a national and international scale, and imperialist barbarism. We cannot know or measure this time today.

What we do know and calculate is that Turkey is a country that can break away from the imperialist world system.

This is a political assertion, but it is a political assertion with a scientific basis.

Socialism in Turkey, perhaps together with other countries on a similar path, will begin to be founded in an environment where imperialism continues to exist and becomes more aggressive because it is nearing its end.

A socialist Turkey will fit well on the road to communism.

For us, the date of 10th of September 1920 is much more than an anniversary because of this approach of ours. We are an honourable party that threw itself into the fire right after its foundation.

A party that embraces the working class patriotism, a revolutionary party that does not give up its claim to socialism and its determination to establish socialism...

We celebrate our 103rd anniversary with this claim and determination.



"To win 2020", İstanbul, December 22, 2019





# THINKING ALOUD on the WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

**Kemal Okuyan, TKP General Secretary**  
**February 2023**

Out of habit, we often tend to use the expression “world communist movement”. However, today we cannot speak of a phenomenon that deserves to be labeled as the world communist movement.

There are communists in almost every country in the world; parties or formations bearing the name of communists are active in many countries. Some of them are quite influential in their countries, some are in power. We can even say that the communist parties are much more wide-reaching today than they had been in 1919, when the Communist International was founded, and in the few years that followed.

But we still cannot speak of a movement.

Because a movement, despite all its internal contradictions, does have a trajectory. It is clear that the communist parties today do not have a common trajectory that we would expect from a movement.

Then we need to answer the question: Is it possible for communists today to be transformed to an international movement?

The “Communist Party” can be defined by its will and determination to lead humanity to a society free from classes and exploitation. While preserving the originality and richness of its components, a sum that is not characterized by this will and determination in its entire fabric cannot turn into a “world communist movement”.

This should not be taken as a criticism or a polemic, but as an objective assessment of the situation.

The struggle for democracy or peace, and being at the forefront of such a struggle, cannot replace the historical mission of communist parties. Similarly, while the struggle against US imperialism is an indispensable task for communist parties, it is not a distinctive feature for them.

We can benefit from the testimony of history to better understand what we mean.

We know that between 1933 and 1945, the world communist movement focused predominantly on the struggle against fascism, while other missions and goals were relegated to the background. But we still use the term “world communist movement” for that period. While explaining this with the existence of the USSR, what we should not forget is the fact that even during this period, the USSR maintained the central perspective of “a struggle for a world free from classes and exploitation”, and despite some mistakes, they kept their efforts in the name of seizing the opportunities that arose for a forward leap of the world revolutionary process.

If the Communist International could be reduced exclusively to the Popular Front politics, we could very well say that in the historical context the world communist movement was in decline starting from the 1930s.

It should be clear that this approach has nothing to do with denigrating the struggle against fascism or other similar tasks. It is only to remind us that the definition of the “world communist movement” requires a common trajectory in line with the historical mission of communism.

In fact, what we need to focus on is how to reach a moment in which this historical mission comes to the fore again, becoming a center of gravity that influences and shapes each of the communist parties with different paths and agendas.

It is obvious that for communism to reach such a level of influence and gravity in the international arena, there certainly is the matter of objective conditions. However, it would be a grave mistake to attribute the leap of the communist movement to some favorable conjuncture that will show up at some unknown moment, especially at our times when capitalism is facing an insurmountable economic, political and ideological deadlock in each and every country. Under the conditions where the rule of capital is tumbling from crisis to crisis and is unable to offer any hopes to humanity, even false hopes, it should be self-evident that communists need to prioritize the analysis of the subjective factor instead of complaining about those conditions.

We need to make bold debates.

The world revolutionary process had begun to have the necessary theoretical and political references for the difficult struggles ahead, following the few decades after the Manifesto of the Communist Party was penned with an unparalleled phrasing. Divergence and

convergence always demand references. By the turn of the 20th century, Marxism had become the main reference for the working class movement, prevailing over its rival, anarchism. However, it did not take long for the Marxist movement to disintegrate. It was a split that even those who argued that “unity” was in any case something good considered as inevitable and necessary. Marxists had roughly taken two different courses, revolutionaries and reformists.

Over time it became clear that there could be no reformist interpretation of Marxism. Social democracy abandoned the revolutionary ranks, inflicting on the working class the worst betrayal in its history.

This also meant the launch of a period in which revolutionaries in the world, who now preferred the name “communist”, renewed and strengthened their references. The 21 conditions for joining the 1919-founded Communist International, could well be seen as the sharpest expression of these references.

As of 1924, when the revolutionary wave in the world retreated, a certain erosion in these theoretical and political references was inevitable. German fascism, and later on the Second World War accelerated this erosion.

In fact, the period between 1924 and 1945, contrary to the founding philosophy of the

Comintern, confronted each of the young communist parties with their own realities and, in addition to that, imposed different responsibilities on each of them in terms of the general interests of the world revolutionary process.

Despite all these, the existence of the October Revolution and its most precious outcome, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as well as the will to establish socialism in those years, strengthened by the transition to a planned economy, industrialization and collectivization in agriculture, provided an immensely valuable historical framework for communist parties. Such will not only prevented deviations, but also served as the necessary ground for leaps forward. The defeat of fascism and the strengthening of socialism following the Second World War reinforced this.

However, the world communist movement was facing very serious internal problems that undermined the integrity it was able to preserve thanks to the prestige of the Soviet Union.

References waned, and “reformist Marxism”, which in some respects was assumed to have been abandoned, made itself vocal again.

The speech of Khrushchev, the then General Secretary of the CPSU, at the closing of the 20th Congress in 1956, cut the last strands

anchoring the world communist movement in the safe harbors and, even more importantly, smashed down the optimism that prevailed since 1917.

What is interesting is that Khrushchev's speech, full of distortions, did not lead to a sound debate and an accordingly split in the world communist movement.

However, the communist movement was expected to preserve and update the principles of 1919 and tie itself to more consolidated theoretical and political references. Instead, what has emerged is a disarray in which a large number of parties with no common ground had their individual relationship in their own way with the Soviet Union, which remained as the most important achievement of the world revolution.

The conflict between the People's Republic of China and the USSR, which ended up in a violent split, also did not give way to a healthy partition. In the period that followed this split, the gap between the parties that maintained close relations with the CPSU continued to widen. As some of the ruling parties in the People's Republics in Eastern and Central Europe tried to overcome their shortcomings during the period



between 1944 and 1949 by ideological hybridization, the internal correlation of forces within the world communist movement became even more complicated. But the problem was much greater. For example, friendship with the Soviet Union was almost the only commonality between the Communist Party of Cuba -which in the 1960s brought a new dynamism to the communist movement not only on the small island where it came to power, but also throughout the Latin America and the world-, and some other parties that turned their faces to Euro-Communism. In the end, until the dissolution of the Soviet Union, no debate or split was realized that would push the world communist movement forward.

After 1991, neither the CPSU which helded many, if not all, parties close to itself existed, nor was there an axis according to which the communist parties could adjust themselves.

By the very meaningful efforts by some parties, notably the Communist Party of Greece, it became a priority task to gather together whatever was left in the name of communism. The Communist and Workers' Parties convened 22 times. This in itself has been extremely important. However, this period did not serve for the communist movement to rebuild its own references in the way it needed to.

And eventually, the view that the communist parties don't actually need theoretical and

political references, began to consolidate.

Today, we do not have a functional mechanism to examine the fundamental differences that can be observed when we look at not only the Solidnet member parties that participate in the International Meetings of Communist and Workers' Parties, but all the parties that identify themselves as communist.

It would be a big mistake to rationalize this lack of communication by hiding behind the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, despite being a principle we think must strictly be preserved in the period ahead.

In the final analysis, the world revolutionary process is a whole, and how each party identifying itself as communist relates to that process does concern all the other actors that are part of that process.

This article can be regarded as a modest way of thinking aloud on the different forms the relationships between communist parties should take under the given circumstances.

It is worth emphasizing at this moment what we can say at the end. Despite the undeniable and wide divergences among the communist parties today, there is no ground for a healthy partition or split.

We need to organize a debate, a really bold debate.

This should not be understood as an appeal for the communist parties to engage in an ideological showdown within and between themselves. The extent of the decay of capitalism confronts the communist parties with the task of channeling a real alternative as soon as possible. At this moment, we cannot limit ourselves with an academic, theoretical debate.

What we need is the following: Establishing a clarification of the theoretical and political points of references from which each communist party acts. There is no sense in considering this as an internal problem of each party. Interaction is one of the most important privileges of a universal movement like Marxism.

Unfortunately, we are not passing through a healthy period for communist parties to listen to and understand each other.

What we need is for everyone to contribute to creating real grounds for discussion without labeling any other party.

Even if there are enough facts to label a party, the need to refrain from doing so is not a matter of political courtesy but is totally related to the particular conditions of today.

The process in which communist parties lost their points of reference has spanned almost over 70 years. The problem is too deep to be

surpassed by premature attempts at splits or separations.

Undoubtedly, parties that have similar positions or those that consider forming strategic partnerships can and should establish bilateral, multiple, regional or international platforms to reinforce this. But the reality is that their contribution to the formation of these points references will be limited.

The organization of a healthy debate requires staying away from resorting to epithets such as reformist, sectarian, adventurist, or opportunist. As said above, political courtesy is not the decisive factor here. Indeed, in the past, much harsher and hurtful epithets have been used by Marxists. But each of these former conflicts matured over the points of references that were thought to exist and shared among them.

I suppose the point where we need to clarify what we understand by the word “reference”, is now reached.

We are talking about historical, theoretical and moral points of departure that have flourished in the bosom of Marxism and have been internationally endorsed.

For example, before the Second International was stained with the shame of 1914, categorically opposing imperialist war was



a principled position that was unanimously endorsed. This principle was the outcome of Marxism acting upon common references, despite the differences on the issue were not yet fully crystallized by then.

Another well-known principle, not participating in bourgeois governments, was also stemming from the same references.

Such examples can be multiplied. What we need to keep in mind is that, what lies at the root of the conflicts and partitions among Marxists in the first quarter of the 20th century are these former common references.

This commonality was the reason behind Lenin blaming Kautsky and others as “renegades”.

As I have underlined above, the Third International developed codes that turned into new sources of reference for the communist movement after the deepening differences in 1914 that led to a split. While some parties were not brave enough to openly declare their distance to these references, some other parties sincerely advocated for and followed them. In any case, the world communist movement has moved within a theoretical and political framework.

I mentioned above that these references already began to lose their influence long before 1991, when the Soviet Union dissolved, and besides, it is impossible today to establish

a new framework that would be endorsed by all.

However, it is obvious that there will be grave consequences for the communist parties to act on a ground whose historical, theoretical and political boundaries are completely lost.

Debate and communication here should serve to establish a clarity on the set of principles that are binding for communist parties, without conceding to this lack of references.

Divergence (if it is inevitable) will serve for advancement only when it is the outcome of such a process.

It is of course possible and necessary in this process, despite all differences, to develop common positions and actions on international issues, such as war and peace, or the fight against racism, fascism and anti-communism. If we do not ignore and trivialize the differences, the positions taken can become more real and the joint actions more powerful.

The aim is certainly not division. The aim should be to help the communist movement, which claims to be the vanguard of the uneven and combined world revolutionary process, transform into a joint movement above and beyond the single elements.

What we mean by a joint movement is not

of course to form a template not taking into account the particularities of struggles going on in different countries. On the other hand, we would all need to be preoccupied with the reason why the dichotomy of “internal issues” and “international relations” has turned into a comfort zone as never before in our 170-year-long history.

Debate, interaction and communication are important because of all these.

But how, and on what shall we debate?

At this point, there should be no room for “taboos” or untouched areas.

Of course, we will need to start from our own histories. TKP courageously made efforts to analyze a very critical turning point for itself, which is the complicated problem that arose right after its foundation, and included the murder of almost all of its founding leaders.

Relations with the Kemalist movement, which had an alliance with Soviet Russia yielding very important, albeit temporary outcomes, and the approach to the bourgeois revolution that led to the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, were among fundamental problems for TKP, which also had an impact in the following years. Our study on the history of the Party, whose first two volumes were published on the centenary of our foundation, proved that we can address such problems with a

revolutionary responsibility.

We are trying to express the same courageous attitude in the face of breaks, splits, and liquidations in the history of TKP, and we are bearing the costs of an honest analysis of the party’s political and ideological preferences.

The issues we are discussing do not only concern Turkey. TKP’s struggle was never in an isolated country since its foundation in 1920. When we examine our entire history, we can see that the ground on which our party struggled interacted with Russia, Greece, Iran, India (and Pakistan), Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Bulgaria, Germany, Cyprus, Iraq, Syria and many other countries.

Beyond this, we cannot speak of the international influence of the class struggle in Turkey as if it is concerning only TKP. In this sense, TKP will never resort to the simplistic approach of “We are the owners of our problems” and take seriously any criticism, suggestion or evaluation that is elaborate and respectful.

TKP also conducts debates and studies within itself on the not-widely-discussed issues pertaining to the history of the communist movement, yet without jumping to conclusions or attaching labels. It is not favorable for communist parties to remain silent on many issues, including the 7th Congress of the

Comintern, the Popular Front policies, the Spanish Civil War, or Euro- communism, and to leave the field open to anti-communists and the “new left”.

There is no issue to be brushed aside for those who witnessed the tragic collapse of the Soviet Union. For us, the idea that discussing certain issues would threaten the values that link us to our own past, is unfounded. What really threatens our values is today’s lack of reference. If we can prevent some issues from turning into a taboo, we will clearly see that the common history of the communist movement is much richer than assumed.

The best example of what kind of adversities can arise when we move away from a healthy process of debate and evaluation, is the Stalin era, which after 1956, was turned into an obscured theme and eventually a taboo, and then into an object of either slander or glorification. It should not be forgotten that the years under Stalin’s leadership can turn into the most illustrative and honorable chapter of the world communist movement, when the fanaticism is left behind.

Communists should have no reservations about discussing any theme pertaining to the history of class struggles. However, more sophisticated mechanisms of debate are necessary if we are not to allow our discussions to be inhibited by our respect

for the preferences of the communist parties struggling in each country.

It is worth elaborating a little more on the idea that the debates should not involve stigmatization. It is obvious that a communist party can label another, either explicitly or implicitly. Of course, we cannot consider all these as groundless. Today, it is no secret that there are some communist parties acquiring social democratic character. Identifying some parties that are practically and politically non-existent as “sloganist” or “sectarian” can also be taken as justified. However, we can observe that these labels do not serve the interaction and debate that we need most at the moment.

We already mentioned that common references in the international arena are lacking. Yet, another truth is that many parties bear within themselves the potential to change. We can characterize this change as positive or negative in each case. Nevertheless, we can also see that the aftershocks of the great earthquake which hit all communist parties in the second half of the 1980s still continue, and that many parties have not stabilized ideologically and politically.

It would be wrong to attribute a negative meaning to these pains of change, which sometimes lead to breaks and splits. What is wrong is actually that these internal conflicts often do not coincide with a tangible and

perceivable process of debate or partition. The lack of “debate” among communist parties does play a role in this viciousness.

In this sense, we can argue that problems are caused by devaluation or denigration attempts disguised by politeness, rather than open accusations.

It is inevitable that relations will become unhealthier in the lack of a real platform of debate.

Until now, we elaborated on the consequences of the lack of theoretical and political references. Another problem arises in the criteria for evaluating communist parties. While evaluating a communist party, we pay attention to its program, ideology, organizational status, actions, its influence in the society, electoral performance, publications, and cadre standards. Some of these are purely qualitative, yet others can be measured quantitatively. However, leaving aside its ideological preferences, and not taking into account easy-put labels such as “reformist”, “sectarian”, “adventurous”, etc., we can judge a political party only by questioning if it is influential or not.

In this context, it is clear that the distinction of “big party-small party” is not a “revolutionary” criterion. In particular, there is no point in evaluating the magnitude of a party based

primarily on electoral results.

There is no need to remind that we are making this emphasis not on behalf of a party lacking a parliamentary victory so far, but on the basis of the tradition that has been shaped since the beginning of the 20th century.

Since equality among communist parties is one of the most important and universally advocated principles, it is worth putting more emphasis on it.

The classification of “big party-small party” does not serve to encourage parties for advancement. But a real debate is absolutely beneficial. Today, any communist living in any country has the right, and the duty, to wonder how another communist party is reacting to the developments in that country, to ask questions, and to express opinions about it.

Whatever conditions it operates under, whatever opportunities it has, it is always possible for a communist party to act more, better and more revolutionary than before. So, the principles of mutual respect and non-interference in internal issues should not nullify critical approaches, and communist parties should not remain in a comfort zone where they are on their own.

Communist parties are not to grade each other, but they follow each other, discuss and look for ways of collaboration. The grounds for

this can be created by evaluating communist parties with sound criteria.

Right at this moment it is worth addressing the situation of the communist parties in power today. All these parties are the bearers of immense historical legitimacy. Insofar as “revolution” and “political power” are of central importance for the communist parties, there is no point in arguing about these parties having a weighted role in the world revolutionary process.

Today, we know that there is a wide range of assessments of the domestic policies of these parties, their ideological and class characters, and the role they play in the international arena. Of course, the historical legitimacy I just mentioned does not automatically create any impunity for criticism. All parties can freely make their own evaluations, given that a certain level of maturity and respect is preserved. It is also inevitable that part of these evaluations could be a bit hurtful. The ruling communist parties, to this or that extent, are also international actors that have influence on the class struggle in other countries.

Is it necessary for these parties to have a particular place among world communist parties, based on the abovementioned extent? We know that some parties struggling in capitalist countries are of this opinion. In some

international meetings or bilaterals, we come across some proposals favoring the ruling communist parties to be at the forefront and to have a decisive, or at least a regulatory role.

Much can be said about the role of the CPSU within the international communist movement in the past, positive and negative. But today, the situation is widely different. The Soviet Union, at least until a certain point, tried to relate its own existence and its foreign policy with the world revolutionary process, even in the most difficult moments. The communist parties in power today clearly do not have such a positioning.

The reasons for this shall be the topic of another debate. In addition, the possibilities and conditions of each of the countries where communist parties are in power are quite different from each other. A totalist judgement has never been appreciated by TKP. Those who are responsible for the socialist struggle not being at an advanced position in capitalist countries are us, and our inadequacies as the communist parties in the capitalist countries.

Moreover, in today’s complex correlation of forces, it is obvious that for the agenda of the communist parties in power, other communist parties do not constitute a priority.

This alone puts the proposals that the ruling communist parties should play a more special



21st International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, Izmir, October 2019

role in question.

The outcome of the ruling communist parties today stepping forward in international meetings and in relations between communist parties would be that communist parties would start to analyze class struggles from a geostrategic perspective. Once again, this is not based on our “subjective” opinions about the foreign policy priorities of the ruling communist parties.

Even though we don't stress it as much, the geostrategic approach would be the most dangerous choice if communist parties are to position themselves within the world revolutionary process. Communist parties shall

approach the international arena by trying to harmonize the interests of the revolutionary struggle in their own countries with the general interests of the world revolutionary process.

This harmony might be difficult or even impossible at times. Yet, for communist parties, it is a must to acknowledge the costs of alienation from the goal of revolution in their own countries and create this harmony as sound as possible.

Geostrategy could at best be a complementary analytical element for Marxism. It is not sound to replace the perspective in which concepts such as imperialism, state, revolution and class struggle play a central role, with power

struggles that can anytime trivialize these concepts.

And here, another problem needs to be brought forward.

Soviet Russia and later the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics exerted a serious ideological and psychological influence “in favor of socialism” on the working people and oppressed nations in the capitalist countries. And this was achieved even during the most challenging moments for the Soviet Union. This was achieved because hundreds of millions of people in the rest of the world felt that in the USSR the struggle for the “construction of an egalitarian society” continued.

Over time this influence waned. The Soviet Union disintegrated. This article is composed of reflections expressed aloud and pays attention to not highlighting negative examples. But I feel the need to move on with a positive example. We need to think about why Cuba, despite all the extraordinarily difficult circumstances in which the country finds itself, can still be a center of attraction for people in search of “another world”. This is possible because the Cuban Revolution, despite a series of setbacks, continues to defend a strong value system.

The boundlessly implemented realpolitik,

which is the inevitable result of geostrategic thinking, may excite some strategists, intellectuals and politicians, but it does not serve as a center of attraction for the working masses.

Communist parties are obliged to turn both the ideal of an egalitarian society and a value system compatible with this ideal into their banner. Even today’s indisputable and pervasive task of defeating or pushing back the U.S. imperialism, should not become a pretext to overshadow this ideal and value system.

The ruling communist parties should maintain their important roles within the family of communist parties with their historical legitimacy and prestige, but calls to give them a decisive role should not be insisted upon. Such insistence, should be kept in mind, could lead to a very harsh break within the communist parties.

After all, the principle of equality and non-interference, which is perhaps the most commonly recognized principle among communist parties today, does not allow for such an internal hierarchy.

Right at this moment, we can be more specific about what we mean by a “real debate”. What is behind the need of not leaving a single point in our own history unilluminated or not honestly assessed is certainly not academic









Mass rally by TKP on May Day, İstanbul, 1st of May, 2018

rigor. When we examine carefully, we see that the “identification of the priority tasks” had been at the center of all debates, starting from the 1st International to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is this simple question that determines the debates and divisions within Marxism.

The priority tasks were once defined as the overthrow of monarchy and feudalism, at other times the expansion of the working class’s right to organize and engage in politics, and in some other cases, the neutralization of the threat of fascism or war.

Now too, communist parties have different views on what is the priority task of the world revolutionary process, of which they constitute elements themselves.

The needs of the world revolutionary process are determining.

Naturally, each communist party evaluates these needs from the point of view of their own country and the interests of the struggle in their own country. The distance between the general needs of the world revolutionary process and the interests within one country is one of the most serious problems that communists have to solve or manage. Sometimes this distance can turn into a conflict. Here, too, the communist parties have a major role to play.

We must admit that today, the differences among the communist parties are yielded by the different responses to the question of what is the priority task of the world revolution.

A very widespread and long-standing approach states that expanding the space for democracy and freedoms is the priority task for the world revolutionary process.

Again, we are more and more hearing descriptions of tasks such as “pushing back the US imperialism” and “repelling the danger of fascism and war”.

It is obvious that these tasks cannot be neglected. However, such definitions of tasks can eventually turn into defending the foreign policy initiatives and moves of this or that country.

It is also a choice to define the urgent task with regards to the interests of the world revolution today as rendering socialism an timely option. This approach, which we also adopt, should be seen as the product of the determination to reject and put an end to the status in which socialism, the only alternative to capitalism, is going through its least influential and assertive moment over a period of 170 years.

Determining the main task on the basis of the timeliness of socialism, and therefore of the revolution, also means eliminating the adversities that can be caused by other

approaches that limit or pacify the working class.

Realistically speaking, it is impossible for the working class in its present form to be the main force capable of pushing back US imperialism or neutralizing the threat of fascism and war. For communists to exert weight in these historical tasks, they need to have the will to fulfill their main mission.

The communist movement will have no future by imitating other forces, by fitting into a broader definition of the left. This is not even a kamikaze dive because it will not do any harm to the enemy. It is also not a harakiri because it will not lead to an “honorable” end.

As a growth strategy, the abovementioned priorities will not help the communist movement to flourish and develop.

Of course, we cannot speak of a sincerity test here. History is the fairest judge. But we all know that communism has red lines.

If these lines have become ambiguous, this can be a starting point for us. Without falling into repetition, without exhausting each other with slogans, quotations or parroting.

The great work of Marx and Lenin is in the totality of their thoughts and action. If what defines Marx's life was his infinite hatred of capitalism, it is revolution and seizing the

political power for Lenin.

In the previous years, at every moment when the communist parties forgot about their own *raison d'être*, they went through some troubles which today can be judged as “mistakes”.

For this reason, if instead of chaotic and unfruitful quarrels, communist parties can contribute to the debates by giving clear responses to how they relate to the world revolutionary process and by demonstrating appropriate ideological and political references, a collectively meaningful outcome will emerge for each of the communist parties. In this way, common positions, joint actions or separations will take place on a much more solid ground.

TKP will make its modest contributions to the international arena with this perspective.



# The COMMUNIST PARTIES MUST FIRST SECURE THEIR OWN HISTORICAL MISSION

**Interview with TKP General Secretary Kemal Okuyan on  
“Thinking Aloud on the World Communist Movement”**

**Marxism-Leninism Today / July 2023**

*What prompted you to write this Thinking Aloud on the World Communist Movement article?*

We all know that in the world, within the left in general, and particularly among the parties that bear the name of communist, there are serious differences of opinion. As sharp as these differences are, they are veiled and almost hidden. There is no real debate. The absence of debate is not a matter of politeness or diplomatic behaviour. In fact, we have no ground for debates. When I say debates, I am of course referring to a process that involves interaction, transformation, and even, when necessary, disintegration. I wanted to draw attention to this extremely disturbing situation and to reflect a historical perspective that I think is related to the sources of it.

*You repeatedly cite the need for “points of reference,” noting the 21 conditions for*

*working class parties’ membership in the Communist International in 1919 as “the sharpest expression of such points of reference.”*

The Communist International set the bar very high when it was founded. Regardless of whether this bar was realistic or not, I think there are some historical and enduring aspects of the intervention in 1919. It is a pity that all the emphases we observe at the founding in 1919, including the 21 conditions for joining the Comintern, are generally attributed solely to the revolutionary conjuncture of that year. I believe this is a very dangerous approach. Yes, it is clear that in 1919 the Bolsheviks, thinking that they could make a fatal blow to capitalism, wanted to force the parties in Europe into a very drastic transformation, which in some respects was unrealistic. The interventions of 1920, which followed immediately afterwards and those we also

observe in the Left Communism pamphlet, are in some respects almost the antithesis of the stance the year before. Then, at the 7th Congress of the Communist International, we come across quite different standards. The danger lies in this perception: Our points of references were different in 1919 when the revolution was imminent, different during the retreat, and completely different under fascism. However, in many respects the framework drawn in 1919 when the Communist International was founded carries principles applicable to all periods, even now! Communist parties cannot act with different strategies and theoretical propositions under conditions that is an outcome of relative stability in capitalist countries and in a revolutionary objectivity. After all, revolutions usually rise at sudden, unexpected moments. If you do not have a revolutionary strategy and a corresponding degree of organisation, the revolution may slip away. Undoubtedly, you have to act with different tactics and means in different periods, but there can be no such thing as communist parties constantly changing their references. This is particularly important today because there is a widespread view that the balance in the international arena is not at all favourable for the working classes to practice a revolutionary strategy. This might sound reasonable and realistic in some aspects but if we adopt an understanding of struggle that is kept only within the existing balance of forces, it is possible that in the event of a revolutionary crisis that capitalism is likely to enter into (and

that time to time we see strong signs of), we may turn into a deer in the headlights.

***But as you pointed out, in 1920, some of those references were withdrawn, and a quite different orientation emerged in 1934-35. What do you attribute this to?***

It is necessary to analyse the conditions and reasons well. I don't want to go into too much detail here, but the concern that the revolution in Europe would not take place as soon as they thought, was understood by the Bolsheviks in the early 1920s. The defense and survival of Soviet Russia, the only concrete achievement up to that point, quickly became the main issue. If we look carefully at this whole period, we can see that the intention was to strengthen the Soviet Union economically, politically and militarily, and to prepare the communist parties of the capitalist world for the next showdown. In this sense, from 1920 onwards, we see that the Comintern developed initiatives in line with Soviet foreign policy needs. We cannot have any objection to this. However, if we fail to see the reasons in the background, we will draw wrong conclusions from Lenin's Left Communism and similar interventions; the new approach in the struggle against fascism in 1935, and we will discuss the mistakes and shortcomings of the communist parties in this whole period on a completely false basis. The assumption that there used to be "sectarian and adventurous" tendencies in the world communist movement until 1935, but that a historical correction was

made at the 7th Congress, which is still valid today, should be radically questioned. I repeat, the communist movement does have to form its references on the premise of the actuality of the revolution. I do not intend to belittle the lessons and accumulation of a long period when the defense of the Soviet Union became clear as a very special and revolutionary task (a period which should have ended in 1945). But we need to get rid of the confusion which has led the communist parties to the following conclusion: “the imperialist-capitalist system is strong, the balance is not in favour for the working class, therefore our point of departure cannot be the actuality of the revolution”.

*You also mention other points of reference for the communist movement such as, before 1914, ‘categorical opposition to a future imperialist war’, or ‘not participating in a bourgeois government.’*

Even at a time when social democracy was a movement representing the working class and the Second International was recognised as a revolutionary organisation, we see that some schemes were used. Schemes are not always bad. If theoretically and practically they have stood the test of time, such schemes facilitate the struggle. Even the Second International, which decayed over time but long before 1914, had some presuppositions. We know what kind of reactions arose when the principle of not participating in bourgeois governments, and not giving representatives to those governments, was attempted to be broken for

the first time. So was “opposing an imperialist war”. It was seen later that opposing the war was not enough, but what I want to say is this: Even during the Second International, which we criticise, the member parties had some distinctive features.

*Do you have suggestions for comparable points of reference today?*

Whether we call it a point of reference or something else, it is clear that the communist parties today face an ontological problem. Why do communist parties continue to exist today? What is the historical reason that communist parties exist today with this name and identity? Is it the defense of democracy? Is it the struggle for peace? To put an end to fascism? Is it to roll back and eliminate US imperialism? All of these are among the primary tasks of communist parties. But none of them can be the *raison d’être* of communist parties. Communism took its place in the political arena both in 1847-48 and in 1917 for a single reason: To overthrow capitalism and bring about the revolutionary transformations necessary for the establishment of a communist society. This historical mission cannot be glossed over. There is a need for references related to this. In particular, references that encourage ideological and political opposition to the exploiting classes on both international and national scales. This issue has nothing to do with excluding the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie from the revolutionary processes



and enabling the working class to form an alliance with them in various forms. We all know that by exploiting classes we mean those sections of the ruling class in capitalist countries which are represented in the political sphere by different elements, from nationalism to liberalism, from conservatism to social democracy. Communist parties do not have infinite options in their relations with the bourgeoisie. In the past, in European countries where monopoly capitalism was highly developed, we have seen that the working class movement held back for years by fictitious alliances which in reality were based on politically very reactionary capitalist groups, and were complementary elements to the domination of the monopolies. This misconception has not disappeared today. Let's look at popular examples, at the root of the pro-Trump or, conversely, pro-Biden, pro-Putin or pro-Erdoğan attitudes observed from time to time in our ranks lies the fact that we have moved away from a simplicity that would leave us alone with our historical mission. "There is no co-operation with the bourgeoisie on any level" may well be accepted as a point of reference. If there is a particular, very particular occasion that requires us put this on hold, we will evaluate it in that particular condition. But at the moment, the communist parties must first of all secure their own historical mission.

*In your article you write "What we need is the following: establishing a clarification of the theoretical and political points of references*

*from which each communist party acts." What exactly do you mean by that? Please give examples.*

In the previous question, I explained the TKP's approach with an example. In order to have a healthy discussion, all communist parties need to make their strategic preferences clear. The first question is, why do they exist as a communist party? Then, what kind of means do they use to achieve that goal? For example, if a communist party sees "the establishment of democracy" as its main, or even the only goal for a long period of time, it must create a road map that is a natural extension of this goal. If there is no coherent approach that constitutes a set of aims and means, there is nothing to discuss here, and the very existence of the communist party may become questionable. Including the ruling communist parties, I am saying that none of the concepts such as peace, democracy, independence, sovereignty, development, industrialization have the power to make sense of the existence of communist parties on their own. As I mentioned, this is our approach. But if the opposite is true, if other aims also constitute a sufficient basis for communist parties to function, then there is a serious need of theoretical and political "production" in this direction.

*You write that we need to have bold debates. But you also observe: "Today, we do not have a functional mechanism to examine the fundamental differences that can be observed*

*when we look at not only the Solidnet member parties that participate in the International Meetings of Communist and Workers' Parties, but all the parties that identify themselves as communist." So how can this debate be organized?*

That's exactly where the problem is. There is something that unites us, but we don't know what that is. We say we have a common past, but this is not entirely true. The October Revolution, the Comintern tradition, the USSR in general seem to be strong historical references, but this is actually misleading. A little digging down reveals that we draw very different conclusions from all these. Look, when I was still in high school, we used to argue fiercely at school with people from different revolutionary groups about the socialist revolution or the democratic revolution. These discussions were primitive, mechanical in some aspects, but we were discussing the real problems in the integrity of ends and means. Moreover, all this was due to the fact that we had different revolutionary strategies. Now, in order to have such differences, we have to have certain strategies of one kind or another. I think that the communist parties, as independent political actors, have run out of strategic goals. Both the perspective for a revolution and the strategy have disappeared, they have evaporated. In this sense, the debate allows us to see our weaknesses and to face the real problems.

*You point to the need for unity on what is*

*the primary task of the world revolution. According to you, this common ground should be defined by the task of making socialism a viable option. Wouldn't defining the common ground between the communist parties in this way cause them to distance themselves from certain agendas in their own countries?*

Such common ground does not detach us from the realities of the home country, on the contrary, would broaden our horizons regarding our channels of intervention in the reality of that home country. It takes internationalism beyond a culture of solidarity and paves the way for a revolutionary interaction and coordination. Look, as TKP, we came out of a recent election. The number of our votes were so little, that had no relation to the political and organisational strength of our party. We are not proud of this, we discuss our inadequacies, the reasons for our low number of votes. However, TKP did not enter the elections with the goal of "getting high number of votes", we did not have a priority such as sending representatives to the parliament. TKP participated in the elections to establish ties with the working people in line with its own revolutionary strategy, to organise, to open a space for itself in a country with very different ethnic and religious fault lines. Getting votes would have been very meaningful as long as it was in line with these goals. This did not happen, of course we are concerned about it. However, we did not change our strategic calculations due to the number of votes we received, because when we look at our

country and our world, the things we focus on are not holding a place in the balance within the system, but the deep cracks of the system, potential points of crisis. We know that we cannot do anything without a strong support among the working people, which is also reflected in the vote, but we do not measure this support and organisation only through elections, nor do we want to harm our historical mission by approaching the voting practice, which now has a completely different mechanics, in a pragmatic way. "Elections go, TKP stays" this is not an expression of ours, but that of our friends. I am not telling these things to prove that the TKP is taking the right attitude. History will judge what we were able to and what we were not able to. However, I should remind you that all communist parties should enter into a strategic planning in line with their missions. Even a very small, not yet so influential party has to start with this.

*You write "The aim is certainly not division. The aim should be to help the communist movement, which claims to be the vanguard of the uneven and combined world revolutionary process, transform into a joint movement above and beyond the single elements." Please elaborate. What would such a joint movement look like, concretely?*

A revolutionary strategy needs a coherent analysis on both national and international scales and the will to transform. Marxist theory is a great strength here. In my opinion, a communist party does not have the right to ask

the question whether the socialist revolution is actual or not. What should be asked is how to prepare for a revolutionary crisis in the given conditions and from which points and by which means to intervene. The question is: Yes, we are primarily responsible for the struggle in our own country, but is not the struggle in our own country part of a world revolutionary process? If we respect ourselves, we will examine the issues bravely, we will not wrestle on the run and we will at least open the way for strategic interaction in a revolutionary direction. If different, incompatible strategies emerge, this is an opportunity for healthy convergences and, by the same token, for healthy divergences. This should not be feared. Because the "unity" that is preserved without such a clarification has no value. We all know this. If we are not going to look for ways for these moves, if we are going to constantly remind each other of the current realities of the world and say it is not the time, we will inevitably face the question of whether there is really a need for communist parties at all.

# NEO-OTTOMANISM: The POLITICAL ECONOMY of CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

**Kemal Okuyan, TKP General Secretary**  
**Morning Star / January 2020**

After failure in Syria, the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is busy developing a second version of his neo-Ottoman project, which he first brought onto the political agenda in the second half of the early 2000s.

There is no doubt that the neo-Ottoman policy of territorial and economic expansionism is a product of the politics and ideology of Erdoğan and his party.

The Republic of Turkey, founded following a bourgeois revolution under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal 100 years ago, was never truly accepted by the Islamist forces associated with Erdoğan.

However, Turkey's expansionist foreign policy over a wide region cannot be explained only by Islamist reflexes.

If it did not coincide with the needs of the capitalist class in Turkey, Erdoğan's neo-Ottomanism would be doomed to remain as a

marginal tendency.

If we want to make sense out of foreign policy of Turkey, a country until very recently seen as a loyal ally of the US that only took initiative on issues that complied with Western imperialist centres, we first have to look at the developments within the imperialist system.

The US has long been having difficulties in sustaining its hegemonic role within the imperialist hierarchy.

One important outcome of this is the weakening of the system of alliances of which the US forms the centre. Today it is increasingly unmanageable.

The challenges that the US faces today are not simply the increasing economic influence of the People's Republic of China or the growing political-military influence of Russia.

Countries seen as close allies of the US until

very recently have started to use a larger range of action. Different political and military approaches within NATO have become visible.

All these developments are consistent with the logic of imperialism. Uneven development and the deepening of competition that eventually turns into conflict is not surprising in a world dominated by the monopolies.

As the imperialist system is shaken from the bottom up, all the actors take a part in the struggle to secure greater shares in proportion to their power.

It would be absurd to expect Turkish capitalism, which has now reached a significant level of development despite its fragile characteristics, to avoid this fight.

Besides, the Turkish bourgeoisie has realised that neither the US nor the European Union is able to offer them a stable growth alternative.

“Stability” is the last word that could describe what is happening these days in Washington, London, Paris and Berlin.

In this context it makes no sense to claim that Turkey is moving away from NATO and settling in the Russia-China axis. Turkey’s ruling class has become more open to bargaining and takes a relatively unfettered and assertive position whenever the conditions are favourable.

However, as of now, it is out of the question that this process is leading Turkey to break off from the NATO alliance.

Protests against the military operation in Syria, İstanbul, April 2018



On the contrary, the Turkish bourgeoisie wants both to “remarry” the US and Germany under different conditions — but keep the broad freedom of action it has today. This approach is compatible with the reality of imperialism as of now.

For this reason we need ask how far the neo-Ottoman project can meet the ambitions of Turkish capitalism.

The Turkish economy under Erdoğan’s AKP party has grown as a result of the lawless plunder of state-owned enterprises, cities, nature, rivers, mines, the freeing-up of space for international monopolies by the provision of all sorts of incentives, together with the destruction of the bargaining power of the working class and an irrational rate of borrowing.

Automotives and construction have become the main economic sectors. Many other industries collapsed. Agriculturally, Turkey is no longer a self-sustaining country. Food monopolies make great profits while small producers are tragically ruined. The economy, shaken by unemployment, foreign and domestic debt and high rates of inflation, has a fragile structure, especially in the finance sector.

For these reasons alone, just considering these economic criteria, one can see that Turkey’s neo-Ottomanism has serious limitations.

When we add that almost all important actors have their eyes on the region, that Turkey is not the most reputable country among Arab countries, that serious opposition exists within Turkey to neo-Ottomanism and that a part of the capitalist class wants Erdoğan’s party, the AKP, to take a less risky foreign policy, it can be seen how hard it is for Erdoğan to continue his assertive game.

Yet it should not be overlooked that Turkish capitalism has some advantages. In comparison with European countries, Turkey has a younger population.

Among them, those with secondary-school and university education constitute the most unorganised strata. With the loss of trade-union and collective rights, this reservoir of educated labour creates a huge competitive power for the capitalists.

Religious fundamentalism, used for controlling the masses in domestic politics, is also influential as a foreign-policy tool.

Lately Turkey has joined the struggle for hegemony between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Islamic world. The initiative — developed by Erdoğan together with Pakistan and Malaysia — should not be underestimated.

This trio of countries is influencing the Muslim population in Indonesia and India through economic, political and cultural channels.

Add Turkey's presence in the Balkans, Caucasus and Somalia and the millions that it could direct via mosque organisations in Europe and especially Germany, and we can appreciate the scale of the network of influence within the Islamic world.

Additionally, Turkey's complex and covert relations with oil-rich countries, especially Qatar, provide significant economic opportunities.

Turkey also has one of the largest armies in the region, allocates large amounts to its thriving defence industry and has become one of the few countries that have the capacity to organise military and intelligence operations abroad. Erdoğan is not simply talking through his hat.

Erdoğan's foreign policy is flexible, pragmatic and opportunist, often changes by the day and is nowhere principled.

It is in the light of all these factors that Turkey's decision to send troops to Libya should be analysed. Erdoğan cannot afford a war that would shake his rule in a serious way. He does not have the necessary military and political resources.

Yet he is aware that, in the struggle for a share of energy resources in the eastern Mediterranean, he has to make new moves to raise his bargaining power.

For this reason, he has chosen to send some of the Islamist militants who are recruited from Syria, some intelligence officers and a limited number of special forces and military advisers to Libya.

His calculations in Libya are different from those in Syria. There Erdoğan is seeking a permanent presence using the pretext of safety concerns created by the Kurdish presence.

It is even possible that Erdoğan may suspend his co-operation with Russia and goes for more co-operation with the US.

When it comes to Syria, although it is true that dreams of five years ago have collapsed, Turkey still has a very wide range of action.

In Libya, on the other hand, Turkey is trying to hook into the struggle for a share in the eastern Mediterranean. As yet it does not have a strong position.

But whether Turkish capitalism adopts a more cautious or more aggressive foreign policy, it is a threat to all peoples in the region, starting with the working people of Turkey.

Just as in any other capitalist country, there is no "good exploitation." For this reason, the revolutionary movement in Turkey bears the responsibility of transforming Turkey, a country now exercising a very large regional influence, into a country where equality and freedom prevails.



# TKP WAS the FIRST to ARRIVE in the EARTHQUAKE REGION

**Interview with TKP General Secretary  
Kemal Okuyan**

**Nuevo Rumbo / February 2023**

*Last Monday, on February 6th, 2023, Turkey was awakened by a 7.8 earthquake in the southern part of the country and the border with Syria. This earthquake has had dire consequences, more than 28,000 people have deceased, and more than 76,000 people have been injured. Amid tragedy and chaos, the political and practical action of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) is noteworthy, as it has mobilized all its resources and moved to the epicenters of the earthquake. Today, we are interviewing Kemal Okuyan, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP):*

***Why can such an earthquake create the terrible consequences we are witnessing nowadays? What is the role of the Erdoğan Government, and what could be done in order to prevent these consequences?***

We can assess the Erdoğan government's responsibility in three respects. First, although Turkey is a country of earthquakes, nothing has been done to be prepared in 20 years of Erdoğan's power. Buildings have not been renovated with a correct reconstruction policy,

a rational and planned urban policy has not been adopted. They expected the citizens to have solved their own problems. The poor people did not have this capacity. Secondly, the AKP (Erdoğan's party) has added hundreds of thousands of new constructions without supervision to the inventory of old and weak buildings in Turkey. Many new buildings that were supposed to be earthquake-resistant were destroyed in the last earthquake. In addition, public buildings, hospitals, airfields, airports, schools and roads, which should not have been damaged even in the most severe earthquakes, collapsed. Most of these have been built in recent years. Thirdly, the AKP government showed great incompetence from the very first moments of the earthquake, and this raised the number of losses to a great degree. The government did not realise the magnitude of the earthquake on the first day, and was therefore slow to take the initiative. A demonstrative example of this is that the TKP started rescue work in Hatay city centre before government officials did. They wasted a lot of time in sending health teams to the region and coordination in the



Outreach by TKP to the villages in the earthquake region, Adiyaman-Kömür, February 10, 2023

health services could not be achieved despite the large number of experienced personnel waiting to be assigned duty. There was an incredible level of confusion and inadequacy in meeting the needs of our citizens who survived the earthquake. Transport and telecommunications services have been almost non-existent.

### ***How can this incompetence be explained?***

There are two reasons. First, the market economy, the capitalist system, collapses in an earthquake of this magnitude. All resources must be used in a planned way, but most resources are in the hands of the private sector. The state has transferred many of the public services to the private sector. They cannot coordinate anything. Second, the AKP is an Islamist party which is at odds with

science. They don't grasp anything except trade and investment. Frankly, if the necessary measures had been taken on day one of the earthquake, the loss of lives would have been greatly reduced. Of course, we cannot put all the blame on the government. We also need to question the current social order. We are talking about a profit-oriented system, and earthquakes only interest the bourgeoisie with regards to new opportunities for profits and rents afterwards.

### ***How do you assess the international mobilization of resources from the different imperialist agencies and countries to Turkey because of the earthquake?***

Imperialism is the hegemony of monopolies, it is a great competition between monopolies in which states and institutions are involved,

it is a struggle for hegemony. In the imperialist world, economic and political interests are hidden behind the concept of “humanitarian aid”. That is why, despite the good intentions of the people involved in them, all aid organisations are for profit, except the sincere efforts in the name of solidarity of the peoples of the world, the revolutionary and communist forces and socialist Cuba. Moreover, the political power in Turkey has been seriously wounded and there are many actors in the international arena who want to turn this into an opportunity. Turkey, right after the earthquake in 1999, rapidly moved closer to the European Union. Now we may encounter similar processes again.

***How has the TKP been acting since Monday 6th? How has been your intervention in the zones affected by the earthquake?***

TKP had 13 party offices and many local cells and organisations in the earthquake zone. Two of our headquarters were destroyed, some were damaged. We lost our comrades, many relatives of party members died. Therefore, only a part of our organisations in the region were able to start the search and rescue work at the beginning. That is why we immediately dispatched teams from other regions. We have protocols drawn up by our party’s emergency bureau. We also have significant experience from previous earthquakes. In Hatay, one of the cities that suffered the greatest damage in the earthquake, the TKP team was the first to start search and rescue work. In fact, we were

going to concentrate more on the delivery and distribution of relief supplies and medical care, but the government’s shortcomings also led us to focus on search and rescue efforts as well. In a short time we established the mechanisms we would need in the earthquake zone. TKP established the most organised and effective emergency centre in Hatay. We have established both resident and mobile teams in other cities. We were the first to reach many villages or small settlements. In total, the amount of aid distributed by the TKP exceeded sixty trucks. Some of them carried the materials collected by the party organisations, and some were provided to us by the citizens only because they trusted the TKP.

***What is the role of the 120 district houses and workers’ houses you have organized all over the country?***

The TKP’s operation in the earthquake zone was managed from three main centres in Ankara, Istanbul and Adana. In these centres, both the distribution of the incoming aid and the destination points of party cadres were planned. Here all kinds of logistical problems, especially transport, were solved. Special assignments were made to call all party members in the region one by one. Soon, people from all over Turkey with whom we had never had a relationship began to send aid materials to the TKP, saying “we only trust you”. Managing all this took a lot of effort. In addition, we have set up special mechanisms to monitor and supervise the donations which

have been accelerated. The party's district houses, for their part, became real places for social work and solidarity. Food and other aid materials were collected in all our district houses, sorted there and transferred to the main centres. TKP would not have been able to establish such an extensive network without the district houses.

*Bearing in mind the consequences known from previous earthquakes, what will be the scenario in a short-medium term once the rescue works are finished, according to your opinion?*

The big monopolies in the construction sector are very happy. Their value immediately rose on the stock market. However, the government does not have the resources to cope with such

a huge destruction. Therefore, Turkey, which already has a heavy debt burden, will need foreign financing and a new burden will fall on the shoulders of the poor. Undoubtedly, for countries like Germany, the US and Russia, which have embarked on a big fight over Turkey, there is now a “wounded” Erdoğan who is vulnerable. A very tough period in domestic and foreign policy will begin. Erdoğan cannot hold elections on 14 May under these conditions. We will see how he plays the game. On the other hand, in just one week, we observed an increase of the influence of the socialist, secular and anti-imperialist accumulation of the country. TKP is receiving the widest level of interest ever in its history. To appreciate this interest and find ways for it to grow is the most important task of this period. A very difficult year is ahead of us.



Earthquake crisis desk by TKP, Hatay-Antakya, February 2023

# TKP on FINLAND and SWEDEN'S ACCESSION to NATO

## Even one vote would have meant something

**Kemal Okuyan, TKP General Secretary**  
soL News Portal / March 2023

Turkey and Greece became a member of NATO on the same date, February 18, 1952. Allegedly, democracy would flourish in both countries, freedoms would be secured and peace would be established in the Aegean.

After NATO membership, political murders, widespread torture, mass arrests, coups, coups d'états and fascism never stopped in the two countries. The two "allies" came to the brink of war several times and actually clashed in Cyprus.

Revolutionaries and communists in Turkey and Greece have always considered it as their duty to stand against NATO. In both countries, the people had been deceived with lies about NATO, and the revolutionists of both countries who were committed to working class patriotism making a great effort to show the true face of NATO and to expose it.

Because NATO was the military alliance of the

imperialist world order.

Because NATO was the organization of international monopolies.

Because NATO was hostile to the working people.

Because NATO would carry out coups, plan massacres, occupy countries and wage wars.

NATO was not an insignificant detail, but the very center of the fight for bread, freedom and equality.

Last year, Greece voted for Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO. For a new country to join NATO, all existing members had to approve it.

The Greek parliament gave the green light to NATO expansion. Among those who voted yes there was Syriza, the party of the "handsome



leftist” Tsipras. The Communist Party of Greece, which defends the honor of the country and the people at every turn in Greece, of course voted against it and organized protests all over the country.

Then it was the turn of the Turkish Grand National Assembly to approve it. On the evening of March 30, when Finland’s NATO membership was voted on, there were only 276 deputies in the Parliament.

They all voted yes.

AKP, MHP, İYİP; they are the Turkish right... The right is always pro-NATO in this country. They sometimes throw a fit, but at critical moments they do not cause any difficulties.

I look at the speeches made before the vote, and they are a joke.

AKP talked about terrorism again. Yet it is NATO that is the most powerful and dangerous terrorist organization in the world. And they said “welcome” to Finland! With the “pride” of being one of the hosts of this bloody organization for years!

İYİP representative Kamil Erozan, on the other hand, was outspoken. “If we were the applicant today, they would not let us into NATO because of the state of our democracy,” he said. He officially declared NATO as the “notary of democracy”.

The MHP is already known.

As for the Republican People’s Party (CHP)... “We would have liked to see Sweden here,” he expressed his regrets. Sweden should not be offended... In other words, the CHP said “Yes but Not Enough”.

As can be seen, the People and the Nation\*, hand in hand, approved NATO’s enlargement.

And then there are those who did not vote.

Those who did not show up undoubtedly have more important things to do. HDP came but did not participate in the vote. They are against all military agreements. Normally they would say no. But Finland had legitimate security concerns and they could not oppose it.

We are asked, “Why do you stand apart, why don’t you ally with the HDP?” Here is one of the reasons. For example, we do not stand side by side with those who do not stand against NATO.

Some may not care about these things, their minds may have become tired from calculating the parliamentary arithmetic and they may have become unable to follow the country and the world.

We do not do that.

We do not give up our struggle against imperialism, our goal of an independent and sovereign country, our defense of secularism and our will to establish an order where the humans do not exploit the humans.

If the NATO vote resulted in 276 yes votes against zero no votes, the communists of this country have a duty on their shoulders to wipe this shame off.

*\*ed. note: Referral to the People's Alliance and Nation Alliance.*

## **Vote for exiting from NATO, not for NATO enlargement!**

### **TKP Central Committee Statement / March 2023**

Today the Parliament will vote on NATO enlargement. The general assembly of the Parliament will discuss the bill ratifying the protocol on Finland's accession to NATO.

This vote is illegitimate. Turkey is in an election process. Parliament will change completely in a few weeks. It is unacceptable to bring the issue to the plenary session of the Parliament like a fire sale.

NATO's attempt to expand in Northern Europe with the accession of Sweden and Finland after the start of the Russia-Ukraine war is aimed at prolonging the war and perpetuating tensions

in the region. The western imperialists, especially the US, do not want this war to end.

On the other hand, Erdoğan has used the agenda of NATO's expansion with the membership of Sweden and Finland as a domestic political material from the beginning. Sometimes he tried to play the veto card with the claim of a nationalist valour, sometimes he tried to curry favor with the imperialist centers by becoming a compliant partner. The result is always the same. Erdoğan's unprincipled foreign policy is once again throwing our country into the middle of imperialist calculations.

NATO is a terrorist organization. Since the day it was founded, it has intervened in the internal affairs of countries, openly or covertly. It has organized assassinations. It has staged coups. It has directed drug traffic. It has shed blood wherever working people come together for their rights and demand equality and freedom.

From the first day, TKP has been standing for the need for our country to get rid of this criminal organization. Today, if something is to be voted in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, it should be Turkey's exit from NATO, not NATO's expansion.

We know that neither the current government nor the other political parties defending the continuation of this social order can do this.



Communist Party of Turkey is very clear on this issue.

Turkey will get out of NATO.

Our soldiers serving abroad as part of NATO operations will be recalled.

American bases in our country will be closed. The nuclear weapons in Incirlik will be dismantled.

There will be no cooperation with those who have accounts in other countries' territories.

Working class patriotism requires this.

## **Not only Sweden's, but also Turkey's NATO membership must be questioned**

**TKP Central Committee Statement / June 2023**

NATO is the world's largest terrorist organisation.

Representatives of this terrorist organisation met today in Ankara with delegations from Turkey, Finland and Sweden. The topic of the meeting is the expansion of NATO once again.

NATO is the world's biggest criminal organisation.

It exists to protect the sovereignty of capital against the working people. And capital needs to protect its sovereignty in a wider area. That is why NATO wants to expand. The peoples of NATO member countries suffer the most.

Now it is Sweden's turn.

The dirty bargaining continues. However, neither a story of independence for our country nor a strong Turkey will come out of making the expansion of NATO a trump card on the bargaining table.

Turkey is a NATO country and NATO, together with the big corporations and international monopolies that have collapsed on all the resources of the country, is crippling our country. It threatens the security of the people. Nothing that will be done in response to the approval of Sweden's membership will put an end to this dependency relationship. Will F16s sold by the US guarantee independence? NATO will ask, Turkey will continue to send troops to Kosovo and other countries. NATO will tell arms companies to produce more, NATO will win, arms companies will win and the people will lose.

The only option that can reverse this picture is an immediate exit from NATO. So that the people themselves can have the sole say over their own country, resources and human power. For the sovereignty of the people, for



Protests on the the 5th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, İstanbul, March 2008

an independent and self-sufficient country.

Those who had the dishonour of passing Finland's NATO membership with zero "No" votes in the Parliament should at least take the trouble to say "No" to Sweden's membership this time. At least for their reputation.

The Communist Party of Turkey will continue to do its part to question not only Sweden's but also Turkey's NATO membership. Because in order to question the imams appointed to our children in schools, our diminishing bread, our stolen future, we need NATO, which protects this order, to be questioned.

## **The struggle against NATO cannot be postponed!**

### **TKP Central Committee Statement / July 2023**

It is only a matter of time before NATO, the world's largest terrorist organisation, expands to include one more country.

We cannot be expected to remain indifferent to Sweden's membership of NATO. Our interest does not only come from our responsibility to fight against the role of our own government in the oppression of the peoples of other countries.

We cannot remain indifferent because, whichever geography NATO expands into, a

stronger NATO with a wider presence in a wider area means, first and foremost, more attacks to intimidate the workers of the member countries. And a growing threat of war all over the world.

We are not curious about the grounds for Erdoğan's assurance that Sweden's membership will be approved by the parliament. We have already said that this is the most counter-revolutionary parliament in the history of Turkey... We will not be surprised by the outcome.

But we will fulfil our increasing responsibility. We will not allow NATO, which threatens the peoples of the whole world with its existence, to gain legitimacy while NATO expands and all the actors of the bourgeois politics in our country pave the way for this expansion by settling in a pro-NATO position. We will continue to remind the anti-imperialism and anti-NATOism, which have stronger roots in these lands than it is thought to be, and we will continue to work for the strengthening of this resistance that is trying to be taken over. Without postponing. Because the necessity to remove NATO from our country with all its bases and soldiers is as urgent as the need to establish an equal, independent and secular country.

# ERDOĞAN'S VICTORY HAS NOT BEEN a BIG SURPRISE

**Interview with TKP Central Committee  
Member Cansu Oba**

**L'Anti Diplomatico / July 2023**

*In recent months, the European press has given the perception that Erdoğan's defeat in the presidential elections was possible. Was this perception also widespread in Turkey? On what elements was this perception based?*

The idea that Erdoğan would be defeated in the last election was widespread in Turkey. And this was no illusion. During the 21 years of AKP rule, the signs that the AKP and Erdoğan might go have never been so clear.

The fact that the social resistance against AKP and Erdoğan continues unabated, even if it weakens or gets tired from time to time, constitutes the social basis on which this expectation rests. The impoverishment and rising costs of living added to years of anti-people policies, especially since 2018, and finally the image of a government that abandoned its citizens to death during the

February 6 earthquake had the potential to put the AKP in a seriously difficult situation.

On the other hand, the withdrawal of support from Erdoğan by the Western powers was also widely discussed during this period and strengthened the expectation that Erdoğan would leave. It is obvious that the AKP has been taking advantage of the contradictions within the imperialist system for a long time to open up a relative space of movement for himself. This led the figure of Erdoğan to become much more difficult for US imperialism to control. This is why the creation of a more controllable alternative to power that preserves the same class preferences had been on the agenda of Western powers for some time. At the end of the day, the alternative that emerged, the Millet (Nation) Alliance, with its lack of internal cohesion, could not become the first address of stability

in terms of favorable regional investments that the Turkish capitalist class had already tasted. Millions of poor workers, who could have broken away from the AKP, preferred to remain under the protection of the AKP because they could not find an answer to their search for stability and confidence in the program of the bourgeois opposition.

As you already know, Erdoğan's victory has not been a big surprise. Shortly before the elections, Western media began to publish analyses that Erdoğan could win again.

***The anniversary of the Gezi protest, which coincided with the second round of the last elections, has just been celebrated. What has that protest left today in the opposition to Erdoğan? What lessons has that protest not yet taught?***

We celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Gezi resistance at a time when we need to remember Gezi the most. The greatest significance of the Gezi resistance was that the people took back control. Against Erdoğan's interventions in social life and his disregard for the law, the people exploded with rage and stood up. In addition to the libertarian side of this uprising, its secular and patriotic character was at the forefront.

The weight of the May 28 election results, which could have meant absolute despair

for the anti-AKP social sectors, could only be alleviated by the people remembering their own power. And it was a good coincidence to commemorate the Gezi resistance at this very moment when our people showed the will to take control of their own destiny. TKP's demonstration at the place where the resistance started was greeted with great excitement in this respect.

This excitement is related to the continuing legacy of Gezi. Since 2013, bourgeois politics has tried very hard to erase Gezi and even avenge it. The people's anger of 10 years ago has not evaporated, but has been repeatedly channeled by the bourgeois opposition to the elections. Ways other than the ballot box to say "stop" to the political power were largely forgotten. Each subsequent electoral success of the AKP has further battered the people's self-confidence. Nevertheless, the anti-AKP, enlightenment and pro-independence resistance did not turn into nostalgia. These sensitivities, which manifested themselves strongly in Gezi, provide important and still valid data on the character of social resistance in Turkey.

What Gezi taught and what it failed to teach is precisely related to this point. All bourgeois actors who claim to put an end to AKP rule but turn their backs on this character have so far failed. The failure of the opposition in the recent elections should be considered from





Tenth anniversary of Gezi protests by TKP, İstanbul, May 31, 2023

this perspective.

*The great dilemma of the European left, from which the Turkish left does not escape, is to find a dimension within an international order, that of NATO, explicitly devoted to military domination, as the expansion to the east of the last 30 years shows. To the point that it is becoming a kind of hypnosis, rendering the European left incapable of projecting itself into the near future outside the Atlantic Alliance. Is this disease also widespread in the Turkish left?*

To the extent that a section of the Turkish left has abandoned its *raison d'être*, especially in the last 30 years, they have acted on the assumption that the existing world social order will not change radically in the near or medium term. And it took a position by accepting the existing balances as a given.

The abandonment of its *raison d'être*, namely the realization of the socialist revolution, meant the loss of an independent stance in many respects. Because moving away from the idea of being the subject of a revolutionary transformation meant making politics in the shadow of other actors who, although not revolutionary, were believed to be able to bring about a social transformation.

Turkey's opposition to imperialism and the US has strong historical references. On the

one hand, it is rooted in the struggle for independence against the imperialist powers in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, which culminated in the founding of the Republic. The other part is related to working class patriotism of the rising socialist movement in the 1960s. These make it difficult for the left to easily fall into the sphere of influence of the Atlantic alliance. However, we can say that support for the European Union became a significant threat, especially in the 1990s and 2000s.

In this respect, the past years have also witnessed a very critical ideological struggle within the Turkish left. As a result of this struggle led by the TKP, we can say that secularism, independence and statism became the defining reference points of the left.

There are, of course, voices among the "opposition" in Turkey who believe that the West and NATO are the guarantors of security, freedom and democracy, and that it is neither possible nor right to leave this line. But these voices have long lost their character as being part of the Turkish left.

*The Kurdish issue, as we know, always plays an important role in Turkish political dynamics. Salahettin Demirtaş, leader of the HDP, has been in prison for seven years now. Abdullah Öcalan has not spoken since spring 2015, meaning that he has not been allowed*



*to make any statements from prison since then. However, in his last statements he had indicated the peaceful and parliamentary path as the PKK's political line, which was then disregarded in practice by the Qandil leaders. Do you think that the new militarisation of the Kurdish struggle that followed, often with NATO support, had a positive function for the Turkish opposition?*

We need to clarify what we understand by the opposition in Turkey. If we talk about the opposition in Turkey in the broadest sense, it seems possible to tag “opposition to AKP and Erdoğan” as the common denominator. However, there are different class positions, ideological positions and political preferences. Moreover, although TKP appears to be a part of this broad opposition in terms of its oppositional stance to AKP, it defines itself not as an “opposition party” but as a revolutionary party aiming for power. In this respect, it seems more appropriate to answer this question on behalf of communists who look at the issue from the perspective of the interests of the working class rather than an abstract opposition bloc.

However, making an assessment of the Kurdish movement requires caution because we are talking about a movement that negotiates with multiple domestic and international actors at the same time and whose grounds of struggle are intertwined with regional and international

dynamics. It has its own internal tensions. Moreover, due to the nature of its national character, it is a movement that acts in a very pragmatic manner. As you pointed out, the US and NATO relations are known. Moreover, these relations do not only consist of military aid. They have direct repercussions on the political line of the HDP. HDP representatives visit the US, refer to the West in their human rights agenda and carefully avoid any anti-NATO engagement. There is also ambivalence in terms of relations with the AKP. On more than one occasion, the HDP and its predecessor parties have provided support to the AKP in the most difficult moments. And most often, these projects had a reactionary and anti-worker character.

We do not agree that there is any possibility of a positive outcome for the working class in Turkey from this pragmatic style of politics, which oscillates between bargaining with imperialism and the AKP and the gunpower, and often moves in both ways.

For a long time, the Kurdish movement was the only strong social dynamic during the period when the Turkish socialist movement was at its weakest and lost its self-confidence after the coup d'état in 1980 and the subsequent collapse of the USSR. This process resulted in a section of the left falling under the determination of the Kurdish movement. In the face of this, we find the independent existence





NATO protest at İncirlik NATO base by Communist Youth of Turkey, Adana-İncirlik, May 15, 2022



of the Turkish socialist movement with its own program vital.

Because one thing is certain, as long as the issue is viewed from the dualism of Kurds and Turks, neither Kurdish nor Turkish workers will benefit from it. And no national problem can be solved under the guidance of imperialism. As we have repeatedly witnessed in Turkey and around the world, nationalism breeds nationalism and the working class suffers the most. It is divided by hostility against one another and weakened.

***Like in Europe, also in Turkey a large part of the left has developed with the support of American foundations which, by spreading money and a culture of rights (often double standards), has hegemonised the discourse. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP itself has clearly stated that its international horizon is strongly within NATO and for EU membership. Does this leftist crushed on the American model have a future in your opinion?***

Interestingly, we have witnessed pro-NATOism expanding its sphere of influence in conditions when the US imperialism's contradictions are at their deepest, when it has lost prestige and is unable to present an exciting project anywhere in the world. I'm talking about the war in Ukraine, where Russia's illegitimate intervention, which paved the way for NATO's expansion, as well as the revival of long-

standing anti-communist propaganda, played a role. As a result, NATO was presented an opportunity on a golden plate that it had been looking for but could not find.

We think that the fact that this pro-US and pro-NATO approach has been voiced so loudly by Kılıçdaroğlu recently in Turkey is related to this prestige that has been partially regained in this process. The fact that it is voiced out loud is new, but the relations of the bourgeois opposition acting within the borders of bourgeois politics in Turkey with the West are not new. This is the case for both the CHP and the HDP. But there is also a special situation in Turkey. While the AKP's moves that play on the balances within the imperialist system and ensure that it has its own field of action have positioned the AKP on a relatively pro-independent position, the bourgeois opposition, including the CHP and the HDP, has started to be placed on a pro-US and pro-NATO side. We find this false dichotomy very dangerous. There is a big gap between the stance that the bourgeois opposition parties represent institutionally and the approach of their social base. As we mentioned in the previous questions, the roots of bourgeois opposition to the US and NATO run deep in this society. Therefore, it is not easy for the US and NATO to completely rehabilitate their image. In addition, the communists in Turkey have not been idle in constantly reminding us of this image. What will determine whether this

bourgeois opposition model will work or not will be the success of those who try to dissolve this dichotomy and build a real class-based alignment.

*Erdoğan's Turkey has always conducted a very exuberant foreign policy. This has often been a reason for international destabilisation, think of its role in Syria and Libya. However, since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, Turkey seems to have taken on, politically and economically, a sort of thin thread that still binds East and West, Russia and NATO. Is this the same perception from inside Turkey? Is it a recognised merit that every citizen is willing to give Erdoğan credit for?*

It is clear that Erdoğan has learned to exploit imperialism's internal contradictions, weaknesses and uncertainties over the years. There is now an Erdoğan who has increased his bargaining power and who will not retreat to a position where he will only establish relations with the Western powers. Contrary to popular belief, this situation favors the US as much as it favors Russia. Precisely because, as you said, it means a channel of communication and a link between the two sides that can be used when necessary.

There is a serious segment in Turkey whose opposition to Erdoğan is well-entrenched for good reasons. They approach the issues with a simple criterion: Whatever Erdoğan does

does not benefit the people. But there is also a large group of poor workers who are part of the AKP's social base. Some of them were inclined to break away from the AKP before the elections, especially after the economic crisis and the devastation caused by the earthquake.

However, the bourgeois opposition, which did not inspire confidence for the reasons mentioned above, was doomed to fail in breaking these workers away from the AKP. Compared to this bourgeois opposition, we can say that Erdoğan's appearance made this rupture more difficult and generally consolidated Erdoğan's social support. Erdoğan supporters are not exempt from this pro-independence vein.

*From the comments read and heard in the aftermath of the elections, especially in European communist circles, there was a certain benevolence towards Erdoğan, as he is acknowledged for his role in breaking with NATO, neutrality in the conflict and openness towards the BRICS. However, this benevolence is not shared within Turkey, by those who claim to be communists in Turkey, to the point that the TKP in the ballot gave an indication of voting for Kılıçdaroğlu. Can you help European comrades understand the internal perspective?*

First of all, we need to say this: The AKP's foreign policy moves were motivated not by

the interests of the people, but by the interests of the capitalist class. Over time, it has been the Turkish capitalist class that has benefited the most from the AKP's unprincipled and mercurial foreign policy. Turkish capital has opened up enormous investment areas that it had not been able to obtain until now, and has gradually increased its trade volume. While all this was happening, the AKP government sometimes pretended to defy the imperialist system, but it always knew its limits and how to return to the position of a compliant partner at the most critical moments. What drew these limits of the AKP in foreign policy were the requirements of the continuity of capitalist power.

We do not see a capitalist class with stronger imperial ambitions as a guarantee of the country's independence, on the contrary, we say that as a result of deepening relations with different actors in the imperialist system, more exploitation, inequality and dependency relations target the working people of our country.

So we had many reasons not to vote for Erdoğan and these moves in foreign policy were never going to change our opposition to AKP and Erdoğan. So what were our reasons for wanting to vote for Kılıçdaroğlu, the opposing candidate?

In making this decision, we asked this basic question: Which option opens the way for a



Protest in front of TUSIAD HQ (organization of Turkish capital), "Our new year gift to TÜSIAD is its criminal files", İstanbul, December 30, 2023





Mass electoral event, “We are telling everything about TKP”, Ankara, April 9, 2023

revolutionary energy in society?

Our answer to this question had nothing to do with any expectations we had for Kılıçdaroğlu or his party, the CHP.

Before the elections, the only feeling that prevailed in a very large part of Turkish society was the desire for Erdoğan to go. TKP, as a party that has fought against the AKP rule from the beginning, became a partner of this just feeling. The society that had resisted the AKP obscurantism for years needed hope and motivation. Erdoğan’s defeat was important for the people to believe in their own power to change, to reestablish their connection with their country and to have hope for the future.

There was also an electorate in Turkey that was very determined to support the strongest candidate against Erdoğan and unwilling to discuss other issues until he was gone. Erdoğan’s presence was getting between us and the people. For this reason, Erdoğan had to be defeated and the people had to see with their own eyes that the alternative within the bourgeois social order that would replace him could not be the solution to the country’s problems. The TKP resorted to a tactic that is also present in the history of the world communist movement, to let the people see for themselves why the option that has been presented to the people as a false hope for years is not a real option.





# TURKEY IS a NATO COUNTRY and WILL CONTINUE TO BE SO, UNLESS the TURKISH PEOPLE CHANGE the EXISTING ORDER

Interview with TKP General Secretary  
Kemal Okuyan

INTERNATIONALIST 360° / July 2023

*Erdoğan also won in the provinces devastated by the earthquake: despite the fact that real estate speculation permitted by his party resulted in many deaths; despite the great shortcomings of the relief effort, which even the TKP had verified on the ground; despite the pre-election rubble clearance operations, conducted without regard for the health of the workers... Why?*

Yes indeed the election results shows that Erdoğan and his party AKP continued to have the wide support in the region that was affected by the earthquake. It is true that this wide region was relatively conservative and traditionally voted for the right wing parties for a long time. However it is not true that the earthquake did have no impact on the ideological and political dynamics on the population. Just the opposite. Millions of people were shocked and even traumatised

as no help came from the state which was something sacred for them. They questioned, for the first time in their life started to discuss and even decide to “leave” the protective shelter of the conservative ideologies. We have clear evidence from our party experience in the region and reports covered by trusted journalists.

*Then, why has nothing changed as long as the electoral results in the region are concerned?*

Simply the bourgeois opposition was not trusted and did not give the impression that it was capable of running this country with too many problems. The conservative population did not feel secure with the opposition that already had no unity. During an election which was reduced to two main blocs, the opposition in fact pushed the masses again back to the secure harbor of AKP. While





“TKP Comes, Everything Changes”, İstanbul, May 1, 2023



AKP was distributing small but meaningful money to the poor people in the region, the opposition was doing nothing to reach those hopeless millions. The effect of the earthquake on the ideological and political orientation in the regions can be seen through the prism of TKP's work in the region. TKP had some organizations in the region but managed to open many new branches. Our work did not turn to votes but we could manage to continue after the elections. No new branches were closed. This would be impossible before the elections. Either nationalistic or Islamist prejudice would be strong barriers for a communist party to function. We function, we have new recruits from the conservative parties. However this is only a beginning, we need a lot of work to get use of this crack. But there is a real crack now.

*In the manifesto of the TKP written at the beginning of 2023, we read: 'The Akp came to power with the slogan of fighting poverty, corruption and prohibitions. Today our citizens are even poorer, the country is suffocated by corruption and ruled by oppression and prohibitions! Not even the extremely difficult economic situation has been able to defeat the sultan. How much has the Islamist and nationalist card played? And the subsidies and gifts?'*

The Islamist and nationalist cards are valid thanks to the strategy of the opposition. The

alliance of the opposition nearly had the same ideological references and they persuaded that this is the "normal" of the country. So there existed no political alternative to an Islamist, neo-Ottoman line. However at the same time the opposition tried to combine this with a stupid pro-western stand. The poor sectors in the society are highly concerned by the "outside world". That is not simply nationalism. That is also a sense of not being secure. Erdoğan kept saying that he was struggling against all world powers. This would be a risk for him if the people realized that the foreign policy of AKP was bringing instability. Wide sections of the Turkish population seek for a strong internal protector that would save them from economic crisis, wars, uncertainties and chaos. And there is the issue of subsidies... AKP managed to get rid of the social rights and the remains of social state policies but instead promoted a more Islamic model: Charity system. You have no right but the state grants! The only thing the opposition did against this was to make fun of those gifts and subsidies. If and only if a strong working class movement could change the mentality of the poor people.

*Erdoğan and his government are among the major culprits for the ruin of Syria: with money from the Gulf monarchies (economic partners) and political support from NATO countries, Turkey has been a highway for jihadists and terrorists from dozens of countries. Together with the TKP, the Peace Association of Turkey*

*denounced this often before being dissolved by the Turkish government in 2016; the Peace Committee of Turkey was then born, which condemned the invasion of areas of Syria by the Turkish army in 2018. Is this also your position?*

Sure, TKP is against any military presence of Turkey abroad. Plus we also struggle against any foreign military presence inside Turkey, mainly NATO and USA. In the Syrian case, TKP has been very consistent starting from the very beginning. We warned all the forces in the region that the so-called “Arab Spring” was becoming an imperialist project and US and some reactionary forces were using peoples’ demands and struggling against some governments that were corrupted and caused a great deal of poverty. While some “left forces” were singing “down with Assad” TKP was saying that the change should be based on the Syrian people’s own struggle and no illusion should be created about the jihadist gangs. We have not changed this position till now and we will not.

*Many Turkish citizens are now impatient with the presence of millions of Syrians; do they not realise that these refugees are the fault of Erdoğan’s belligerent and pro-jihadist policy? And what about the last-minute attempt by Kılıçdaroğlu to get some votes by promising that the Syrians would be repatriated in 2 years, thanks to peace with Syria? Was one of*

*his mistakes?*

There is of course a problem of immigrants with all dimensions. TKP is handling the issue with a class-based approach, struggling against any form of racism and trying to defend the rights of the immigrant workers. However we also take into account the organised fundamentalist armed groups within the immigrants coming mainly from Syria, Libya and Afghanistan. This is a real security problem for the working masses. We can not deny that there is also a systematic attempt to change the demographic structure of some regions of Turkey which also has political and ideological consequences. So TKP has no intention to be a part of the immigrant romanticism which is pumped by liberal circles. Of course where there is capitalist exploitation there are attempts to break the unity of the working classes, to promote nationalism or some other divisions to weaken the class movement. All over the world they are using the immigrant workers not only for cheap labour but also for creating confrontation inside the working masses. The same happens in Turkey. However the main source of the reaction towards the immigrants is the secular middle classes which were poisoned by the idea that the Syrians were threatening the society culturally. True, there is a real cultural problem but those who fear that immigrants will harm their daily life forget that the conservatism and the fundamentalist ideas

are basically domestic issues. Kılıçdaroğlu exaggerated the hatred towards the Syrians and exercised an extreme nationalistic line especially during the last weeks of his campaign. Plus, the opposition did not have a solid policy towards the Syrian problem. They could not convince the people.

*In foreign policy, Erdoğan plays on many tables: at the same time he occupies Syria, supports the most fundamentalist militias in Libya, but has very good relations with non-Western countries that were against the proxy war in Syria and are against NATO and its wars (also in Libya in 2011). It sells arms to Ukraine but is considered sided with Russia by those who are not with Kiev. Finally, Turkey is in NATO and will remain there and will even accept Sweden's entry, bartering it with the handing over of Turkish political opponents. Why does even part of the Western left (always in opposition) consider Erdoğan independent of NATO, NATO which is present at his coronation?*

Turkish capitalism should not be underestimated. Yes, we have a fragile economy, a great deal of debt, and the financial system is relatively weak, in some sectors dependent on Russia and some on Germany. Yet the Turkish capitalist class is very flexible and dynamic, benefiting from the weakness of the Turkish working class. But not only that. Turkey for many years had close

links with Germany economically and with the USA politically. As the hegemony of the US imperialism has been weakened, like many other actors in the world Turkey started to look for a wider space and acted more courageously for new markets. The Turkish bourgeoisie has been investing a lot for many years now in the Caucasia, Balkans and the Middle East and some parts of Africa. These were mainly parts of the Ottoman Empire and the AKP government is promoting Neo-Ottomanism towards those regions. So ideological motives also accompany the Turkish capitalist classes' interest. And there is also the Turkish army, which has a lot of bases abroad, defending those interests. Nobody should expect that Turkish foreign policy will be pro-US like it was during the 1970's or 80's. It is still pro-US and pro-NATO but in a different style. The problem with some left forces in the world who think that Erdoğan is against NATO or even anti-imperialist is their shortcomings related to the concept of imperialism. Imperialism cannot be reduced to foreign policy of the great powers. It is an outcome of monopoly capitalism and each and every capitalist country has a tendency towards imperialism. Not all can practice of course but this process is intrinsic to all. TKP has always evaluated Erdoğan with a class based analysis. He is a man of Turkish big capital. That is the main issue. His bargaining with US and NATO sometimes of course presents us time and some possibilities but at the end of the day we should know that



Turkey is a NATO country and will continue to be so unless Turkish people change this existing order. Of course this does not mean that we see the NATO issue as a problem of the future. TKP is constantly waging a struggle against NATO.

***And now, how will the opposition to Erdoğan move? The coalition already dissolved.***

The bourgeois opposition has disintegrated. The right wing parties, after helping the social democrat CHP to turn itself to a right wing party and getting into the Parliament by the help of her, now keeping their distance. And CHP (the Republican People's Party) now has severe internal problems. The Parliament is the most reactionary, right wing parliament ever. Erdoğan will be very confident in the National Assembly and try to impose a new Constitution. This parliament can create no problem for the AKP. People started to free themselves from parliamentary illusions. TKP is trying its best to benefit from this. The electoral results that TKP got has nothing to do with the influence of TKP among the society and its organizational strength. As the burden of the economic problems will be put on the working people in the coming period, there will be a real and tough task for TKP. This class-oriented struggle will be combined with an anti-imperialist and secular stance as Erdoğan will need to have better relations with the Western monopolies and also increase the

Islamic elements in Turkish social and political life. We are ready for this challenge.



# EVEN IF COMMUNISM IS REPRESENTED by a SINGLE PERSON in a SINGLE COUNTRY, THAT PERSON'S TASK IS TO FOCUS on the OVERTHROW OF CAPITALISM

**Interview with TKP General Secretary Kemal Okuyan**

**L'Anti Diplomatico / September 2023**

*Comrade Okuyan, now the left movement in the world is going through hard times. The Social Democrats in Germany are losing support, Die Linke is split ideologically and organizationally. In Poland, left-wing parties and activists are marginalized; in Ukraine, they are banned. In Italy, the left has long been divided into several competing parties, as in Russia. In France, spontaneous social protests were used not by the left, but by the right. How do you assess the development and prospects of the global left movement at the moment?*

The left is generally in decline all over the world. But why? Could it be that the left is regressing because it is no longer the left? In our opinion, this is true.

For example, I do not consider German Social Democracy to be leftist, although many

perceive it as such. Moreover, the TKP uses the concept of “left” less and less.

Of course, in reality it is impossible to separate political actors with clear boundaries, there is a gray area, but in order to separate the wheat from the chaff, we will have to get rid of the ambiguity around the concept of “left”. Either we will fight for hegemony in the “left” and explain to the public that such bourgeois movements and ideologies are not left, or we will not use the concept of “left”. We are communists, and this is quite indicative and characteristic.

Capitalism constantly generates crises of various kinds. Poverty, unemployment, injustice, police brutality, immigrants... If you can't offer radical and revolutionary answers to all these problems, are you on the left?

The Communists bear the greatest responsibility here. The struggle against liberal and social democratic tendencies was underestimated. The relevance of socialism and revolution was pushed aside due to the prevailing balance of power, and the struggle for positions within the system became a fetish. Moreover, the criteria for success began to be determined by bourgeois politics. From this follows the right, not the left. This is why the far right is gaining ground in the streets.

*What is the current situation of the left, without quotes, in Turkey?*

The parliamentary elections in Turkey provide some interesting data in terms of what we are mentioning here. TKP received an absurd number of vote in a ridiculous, meaningless election that captured the society with desperation and blackmail. Anyone who follows Turkey a little realises that TKP had an impact far beyond the number of votes we received. As a matter of fact, after the elections, TKP was quoted and discussed more, and the recruitment of new members accelerated. Therefore, we observe that the bourgeois parliament has lost its importance and prestige in the social sphere. TKP continues its struggle. Undoubtedly, we evaluated the election results, we discussed the reasons why our political influence did not turn into votes. TKP is not a party that will brazenly say “elections

are not important”. However, we are also not a party that will question ourselves based on the election results. Our party continues to defend its principles and programme with self-confidence.

*Movements for social justice are divided geographically and ideologically, concentrated on local problems. Many movements have turned into “closed clubs”, into “things in themselves”. What can communists, Marxists, left-wing activists in different countries of the world do to establish communication and interethnic dialogue?*

Discussion and dialogue alone is not a solution, of course. In fact, there is no point if we are talking about vicious and fruitless discussions that cause revolutionaries to close in on themselves. However, if we organise a discussion that encourages each other, forces us to be honest, encourages us to engage in real political struggles, this will be different.

The way to do this is to stay away from impositions and templates. And we must not repeat the mistake of sidestepping our points of division and ignoring them in the name of “unity and diplomacy”. There is no “unity” at the moment. For there to be unity, there must be a commonality of direction. On the contrary, there is disorientation.

I miss the atmosphere of lively debates when I

entered the political struggle almost as a child. I have to say that I even miss the coherent expression of certain views with which I disagree. But the issue is not our personal needs.

Political parties and circles that are in contact with each other for various reasons need to encourage a real, lively and creative debate, for a healthy understanding of differences and commonalities. Without this, healthy partnerships and unities cannot be established, nor can there be a healthy separation. After all that has happened, it is useless to speak by rote and to cowardly say “let’s unite, we are all leftists”. At least for communists... We need to be brave, understanding, respectful, open and creative. The TKP is making efforts for the creation of such an atmosphere while maintaining its own accumulation.

***The events in Ukraine split the left movement even within the borders of individual countries, the factions began to take “geopolitical” rather than class positions - “pro-Russian” or “pro-Ukrainian.” Let’s talk about these positions.***

I think those who follow a pro-Russian line also know that Russia is a capitalist country. If the problem was deciding on the socio-economic character of Russia, our job would be easy. But the issue is more complicated.

Some people believe, or pretend to believe, that for objective and subjective reasons the current government in Russia will gradually take a socialist turn. I feel too much of a Marxist to believe that socialism can be realised in a country like Russia, a developed country with great resources, just by politicians changing their minds.

Look, in Russia, welfare state practices may come to the fore or may regress over time. The share of the state sector in the economy may increase or decrease. These do not change the class character of the state. I don’t mean that such changes are unimportant. We follow, analyse and evaluate them closely. But we do not expect that Putin or his circle will simply come to the conclusion that “socialism is good”. The class struggle does not take place that way. What we are really looking at is the Russian working class.

Some people say that “Russia is capitalist, even imperialist, yet we must side with Russia in the war in Ukraine”. There are those who say that this is a war of defence, those who say that this is an anti-imperialist war, and those who consider the issue from the point of view of the struggle against fascism. Our main point of departure is not to approach any capitalist country or class with empathy. Communists cannot postpone the struggle against the bourgeois class in their own country. If this principle is ignored, we can find countless

excuses for taking sides in the imperialist world, for supporting this or that bourgeois party.

For example, today we consider it wrong to take sides in the war between Ukraine and Russia. But not because we identify or equate the two sides, or because we are avoiding the fight against NATO, the real power behind Ukraine. No, no, no. I am very clear, if it was a matter of preference, it is obvious who we would prefer.

Turkey is a member of NATO and all humanity has suffered a lot from NATO, from US imperialism. In Russia, the capitalist class does not pose such a threat for us today. But it is not really a question of who we would prefer. The issue is to make revolutionary moves in the capitalist world.

Today, the working masses in Russia or Ukraine or in other countries need to take a position that questions capitalist exploitation and tries to overthrow it. This applies to Iran as well as Turkey. Otherwise, we will endlessly continue to choose between “who is better and who is worse”.

***The current Ukrainian government has banned opposition political parties, including 11 communist parties, as well as the Left Opposition, the Union of Left Forces, the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Party of***

***Socialists. The Security Service of Ukraine has repeatedly published photographs of “evidence of a crime” - busts of Lenin, red flags and books of Marx found during searches. Decommunization is the official policy of Ukraine. Even the UN Security Council was informed about the repressions against communists, socialists and trade unionists.***

***But why do supporters of Ukraine among the European left “not notice” this? What is the role of the Ukrainian authorities in the formation of such a “left lobby”?***

See, here is a difference. Today, a pro-Russian attitude is wrong, at least for the time being we can consider it as such. But a pro-Ukrainian position is clearly counter-revolutionary.

Without going into the debate on whether the government in Ukraine is fascist or not, it is nonsense to say that Ukraine is fighting for freedom. It is a betrayal, just as it was a betrayal to support the bloody military operations against Yugoslavia. Yes, there is an occupation and communists fight against occupation. But what we are going through cannot be simplified to an occupation.

The issue has a long history that includes the collapse of the Soviet Union. In fact, what should be emphasised is the 1991 counter-revolution. The thesis that “Ukraine was fine until 2014, then a pro-NATO coup took place”

is not correct. The roots of the 2014 coup must be traced back to 1991. Each of the “independent states” that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union has a legitimacy problem, which is valid not only from our perspective.

Ukraine is a stronghold of fascist movements, anti-communism, racism, pro-NATOism and militarism. The Putin regime must be “congratulated” for allowing such a dark Ukrainian leadership to play the role of “heroes of freedom”!

So where should we look? We should focus not on which forces are supporting the bourgeois governments in Kiev and Moscow, but on which forces are building a revolutionary and independent strategy.

With this regard, while I strongly protest against the hysterical campaigns against communism and its symbols in Ukraine today, I must remind you that such campaigns have been waged in Russia since 1991. The coat of arms with the hammer and sickle that the Ukrainian reactionaries dismantled does not represent today’s Russia, but the world communist movement and the USSR. Let us not forget that the biggest blow against that coat of arms came from Russia.

***What would be the right strategy for the left regarding Russia?***

It is a great mistake to move away from the idea of the actuality of the socialist revolution because the balances of forces does not allow it today. The imperialist system is experiencing an enormous impasse, a deep political-ideological crisis, and we are still engaged in a meaningless debate about whether Trump or Biden is preferable, whether Erdoğan is really anti-imperialist or not, whether Russian capitalism will evolve for the better or not.

Today, even if communism is represented by a single person in a single country, that person’s task is to focus on the overthrow of capitalism. This must be patiently explained to the working masses, organised and fought for, and preparations must be made to seize the opportunities that will arise.

It must be recognised that goals such as first establishing democracy, first obtaining some rights, first entering the parliament, first putting fascism aside, etc. are self-deception. The greatest achievement of the Bolsheviks was that even in their weakest moments they were thinking of revolution, of seizing political power. And their greatest chance was that until 1917 there were no mechanisms in Russia to seduce them, to attract them to bourgeois politics. In February 1917, when a situation arose that confused all Russian revolutionaries, Lenin made a unique intervention. The April Theses should be read with this in mind. Had this intervention



been delayed by a few months, the October Revolution might not have taken place.

*The President of Turkey regularly comes up with international initiatives. Turkish communists, on the other hand, concentrate on domestic problems. Isn't it time for the Turkish communists to broaden their horizons and come up with international initiatives? Maybe even become an international platform for communication between the left forces of the whole world?*

We are an ambitious party, but we cannot move away from reality. We truly believe in the importance of modesty, in the idea of equality between communists. We don't overestimate anyone, we don't boast, nor we look down on anyone, or stay under the shadow of anyone. We learn from others, yet we do not imitate anyone. It is useless. If others benefit from our experience, that is also a good thing.

In recent years, Turkish capitalism has gained more weight in the international arena. This is a clear fact. Therefore, our responsibility increases. Because we cannot wait while Turkish capitalism increases its influence both economically, politically and ideologically. We are communists, we love our country, we would never betray our country and our people. In this sense we are committed to working class patriotism. However, it is our internationalist responsibility to stand against

the foreign policy practice determined by the interests of the capitalist class in Turkey. This is one thing.

Secondly, we think that what has happened in Turkey, especially in the last 20 years, constitutes interesting lessons for the whole world. We want to share these lessons and our conclusions more. We do not have a strange claim such as Turkey is asked from us. We also try to follow and understand the evaluations of communists in other countries about our country. TKP will do everything to discuss and dialogue in a constructive, friendly and productive way. We do this not for "mental exercise", but to pave the way for the world revolution, which is our common cause.

In the international arena, our relations are developing. We are trying to develop a frank, mutually respectful and sincere approach. When we unintentionally go beyond this, we would like to be fed back about it. Coming back to your question, TKP will do its best to revive Marxist-Leninist thought and practice.



