

Turkey Ten Years After

Renewed Repression and Revolutionary Upsurge

Ten years have passed since the fascist military coup of September 12, 1980 took place in Turkey. Recently, developments bearing highly significant consequences in terms of their dimensions and range of influence have been taking place in the domestic and foreign arenas of Turkey's political affairs. A brief look at the period extending from the September 12th fascist coup to the present day, will be helpful in clarifying the actual course of these dynamics and the role of certain events within this process.

by Filiz Cetin

The September 12th coup arrived with a program comprising the following issues: (a) to overcome the political crisis, (b) to overcome the economic crisis, (c) to eradicate the revolutionary struggle, and (d) to restructure the Turkish economy. The political crisis had drained any possibility of a parliamentary solution: The parliament had not been able to elect a president of the state for over a year. With all the deputies moving from one party to the other, in exchange for personal benefits, and widespread corruption, no one had any respect for the institution. The government, with its inability to put an end to the daily killings and attacks, had lost all credibility. The economic crisis had paralyzed the bourgeoisie. There was a great shortage of hard currency; investments had stopped; the country could not pay its debts; lack of hard currency threatened imports; high unemployment and inflation had decreased the buying power of the population; and there were widespread strikes.

The revolutionary struggle was winning ever wider recognition each day in the face of the deteriorating living conditions of the masses and their increasing dissatisfaction. This had to be suppressed in order for the austerity measures prescribed by the IMF and World Bank to be carried out to the letter without any opposition from the masses who would bear the brunt of these measures. The brutal nature of these measures would surely contribute to the development of even closer organic links between the

revolutionary forces and the masses. The bourgeoisie was aware of the potential threat such a situation would pose to the regime.

The division of labor within the imperialist hierarchy had assigned Turkey the new role of opening up its domestic market to foreign competition and adopting the Friedman model as used in Chile. To achieve this transformation of an economic structure where industry was basically oriented toward the domestic market into an export-oriented economy which opens its domestic market to foreign business, finance capital needed to have complete control over all resources. This in turn demanded total submission and silence on the part of the masses who would be suffering under the pressure of soaring prices, fixed wages, increasing unemployment, and official and non-official plunder sanctified under the slogan of activating all inert resources.

Within the framework of this program, all mass organizations were banned, and campaigns of arrest and manhunt were carried out. An atmosphere of pacification, depolitization and defeatism was imposed on the population. Repression was exerted against all centers of influence that could cause the regime problems in its drive to reorganize the country. The nascent armed struggle in Kurdistan got its share of the repression too. By banning all parties and blocking even any bourgeois opposition, the regime tried to monopolize the political life. All this was realized through the employment of systematic state terrorism, tor-

ture and massacres which were to keep Turkey constantly on the black lists of Amnesty International and other human rights organizations. Policies were implemented aiming to create new generations in total compliance with the system, and to strengthen religious and fascist trends among the masses. The goal was to freeze class struggle and to provide the atmosphere allowing the regime to go its own way without any second thoughts.

What do we see as the tenth year ends?

—The working class has gone out on the streets in various forms of protest and demonstrations. Tens of thousands are on strike, with the number planned to rise to over a hundred thousand in September. An explosion in late January, killing 67 workers in a coal mine, evoked widespread protests all over the country, in factories and in universities. Mine workers, their families and the townspeople refused to allow a state ceremony to be held at the funeral and booed the representatives of the bourgeois parties and the government.

—Peasants, especially the tobacco and tea growers, are very desperate. Ten thousand tobacco producers demonstrated for over a week in the Aegean region in February, protesting the very low prices set by the government. They attacked local offices of the ruling Motherland Party (ANAP), destroyed the shops of tobacco merchants and blocked highways. Whole villages went on hunger strike, protesting the ever deepening poverty.

—In universities and high schools, the youth's democratic struggle is rising against the depoliticizing, reactionary education system, against the presence of police forces at educational institutions, and for the right to establish student unions. Progressive youth are waging a difficult struggle to break open the shell of silence and fear imposed on young minds during the reign of state terror.

—Over a thousand political prisoners are currently on hunger strike in nine ►