

prisons, protesting the prison conditions and the increasing repression throughout the country.

—Two leaders of the United Communist Party of Turkey were released from prison in the beginning of May. In interviews published in the Turkish press after their release, they praised the prison conditions and said that they were not as bad as they had thought when they were in Europe. They expressed their intention to contribute to the stability of the democratic regime in Turkey by founding a communist party, contending that the party's illegality constitutes a setback for the regime itself.

—An intifada has broken out in Kurdistan. The guerrilla struggle, waged by the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) since 1984, took on a new dimension with the outbreak of broad popular demonstrations and resistance. The rising struggle in the prisons and the mountains finally enabled the Kurdish people to overcome the barriers of fear; they revolted against the heavy repression and poverty despite the massive military presence of the Turkish state. Young and old men and women, children with nothing but stones and sticks, have started to defy the Turkish army and Special Forces. The events broke out during the funeral of one of the 13 guerrillas murdered in an ambush. The military refused to give him a proper burial. The people of his town, Nusaybin, took to the streets in defiance of the military and made the funeral themselves. One person was killed and scores wounded when the military forces opened fire on the indignant crowds. Sev-

eral hundred were arrested. The masses displayed even greater defiance in the funeral the next day. They attacked government buildings; all the shops were closed down in protest; everyone was on the streets, tires were burnt on roads. The protest quickly spread to many centers in Kurdistan: Cizre, Idil, Erur, etc. Shops closed, and there were mass demonstrations with people openly shouting their support for PKK. In one instance people following the imam out of a mosque demonstrated in the streets chanting: Long live Kurdistan, Long live PKK. Reporters of the Turkish press noted that in the «East» there was the state and the PKK, the parties of the parliament were practically non-existent. Security forces were helpless to stop the masses. They broke shops open with axes. Many journalists were severely beaten by the military. A student of medicine set herself aflame in the town center of Diyarbakir in protest of the repression. This sparked off new demonstrations in several places. Students in the big cities of Turkey demonstrated in solidarity with the Kurdish people's intifada. Similar demonstrations were held on the occasion of the Kurdish Newroz holiday. When the government started to censure the developments in Kurdistan, PKK declared a boycott on the Turkish press, and the circulation of the daily papers dropped by 70%.

The evident organic link established between the guerrilla struggle and the masses threw the entire regime into panic, from the rulers to the parliamentary opposition. They formed an

anti-terror alliance, approached the NATO for help and threatened to attack «the evil at its roots» (Turkish and Kurdish revolutionary forces in exile).

—May First demonstrations were forbidden, but thousands of demonstrators defied the ban and went out on the streets although the police forces prevented them from uniting in a single demonstration. Three thousand were detained; two were wounded by police fire, one young girl being crippled for life. Istanbul was under the terror of added security measures. The population left the streets and preferred to stay at home, turning Istanbul into a ghost-town until demonstrators poured out on the streets in different parts of the city only to be attacked by the police shortly afterwards.

—Boycotts started to be organized to protest the rising prices.

—The two leaders of the United Communist Party of Turkey founded their party officially.

What had happened? Had the regime grown more democratic, allowing more room for dissent and demonstrations?

The September 12th regime had planned to institutionalize itself through a process of soft transition and controlled democratization. A new constitution was drawn up and laws passed to allow for this. A tamed bourgeois opposition was brought on stage. Safety valves were designed to let off tension at times of rising pres-

Cizre, Kurdistan in March

