

A Brief History of Capitalist Development and Working Class Movement in Turkey

Mark  **Sist**
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The process of the capitalist development of Turkey is a rather belated process with respect to the West. This historical delay flows from the peculiar socio-economic structure upon which Turkish capitalism developed. For this reason, in order to understand the peculiarities of Turkish capitalism, it is necessary to have an overview of the economic and social history of the Ottoman Empire that forms the historical background of modern Turkey today.

The Ottoman state was established at the beginning of the 14th century (in the year 1300). It became a genuine empire only after the conquest of Istanbul (1453). Examining the history of the Ottoman state, we can speak of three different periods, each having its own properties, covering the 600 hundred years between its establishment and its collapse.

The first period, which lasted until 17th century, was a period of rise into a colossal empire in which the Ottoman State was expanding territorially, with conquests both in Asia and Europe . From the standpoint of its socio-economic and political structure, the Ottoman State reflected the traits of a classical Oriental despotism in this period, which took shape on the basis of an Asiatic mode of production.

The second period that lasted from 17th century to 19th was a period of faltering before the rising capitalist West. The land system, which constitutes the economic basis of the Ottoman despotism, starts to spoil; corruption and disorder increases in the administration of state; struggles for power among the ruling

state class intensifies.

And finally the third period, covering the whole 19th century, is the period of collapse in which the empire began to dissolve and disintegrate in every sphere, gradually becoming a semi-colony of the West.

The Ottoman society and Asiatic mode of production

While investigating the historical evolution of pre-capitalist forms of property and production relations, Marx paid much attention to “Asiatic mode of production” and “Oriental despotism”. This socio-economic formation seen in the East was similar neither to the ancient slavery nor medieval feudal mode of production.

The common feature of ancient slavery and medieval feudalism, which appeared under certain historical conditions in the West, is that both these modes of production were based on individual-private property. It was the noble private land-owners who extracted the surplus created by the direct producers [slaves and serfs] working on the soil in these societies. The state both in slavery and in feudal society was a special instrument of oppression, organised to insure the big land owners’ rule over the direct producers.

Yet, when we look at the historical evolution of these Eastern societies, both in the property forms and the production relations, the formation of classes and a state developed rather differently because there was no individual-private property on land in these societies, and there was no private property owning class either, as existed in the West. In Eastern societies the property of all land and natural resources belonged to “the higher unity”, that is the state, at the head of which sits the despot. As the real owner of all land, the state was also the real owner of the surplus produced by the direct producers (agrarian communes). The despotic state was the centre of gravity for all agrarian communes and it appeared as “a holy father”, safeguarding the order before these communes. Being the ruling power of Eastern societies, the despotic state had three basic functions; war and conquest (foreign loot), taxes on land (domestic loot), and the public works, which are necessary for reproduction.

Marx examined the “Asiatic mode of production” and “Oriental despotism” in his *Grundrisse* and in *Capital*, and in his many writings on this subject assessed the history of Ottoman society as a history of Oriental despotism, similar to the histories of India, China, Iran and Russia. Indeed the Ottoman society, at least

until the 19th century, constituted a typical example of Oriental despotism from the standpoint of both the mode of production and the structure of the state.

In the period of its founding and further expansion, the Ottoman state was to conquer many lands, which then became the property of the state, with both the Muslim and non-Muslim populations [direct producers] becoming the taxpayers bonded to the land [reaya]. A Military bureaucracy [sipahi] was installed to carry out the administration of these lands.

The military bureaucracy in the Ottoman Empire was the most important and significant section of the state ruling class. Sipahi who represented the central authority (sultan-state) in the land they administered, were responsible for management of the land, collecting the surplus (in the form of taxes) produced by reaya and looking after soldiers for the Ottoman army in case of war. This production relation established on land was very important for the Ottoman state, because its economy was based on war and land conquests and this production relationship enabled it to foster a big army.

No individual ruler, military or civil, in the Ottoman society could be the owner of land property in his own right, and consequently, unable to use the right of individual exploitation on producer peasants. The established status quo did not allow individuals to accumulate individual wealth and to use it as they wished. That means that there was no relationship, similar either to a “seignior-serf” relationship or to a “patrician-slave” relationship in the Ottoman order. The central despotic structure of the Ottoman state and the overwhelming state ownership of landed property never allowed an independent force, that is seigniorisation, to develop against the central authority. The only possessor of the landed property and the sovereignty was just the monolithic state personified in the monarch (sultan).

Thus the system of exploitation in the Ottoman Empire was working collectively rather than individually and it was taking place through the state. The surplus taken from direct producers in the form of taxes was first gathered in the treasury and then distributed to the ruling state class (the high officials in the palace, the top military-civil bureaucracy and the religious ulema) in the form of salaries and grants. At the top of this ruling class pyramid, organised in a highly centralised and hierarchic-bureaucratic manner, sits a despot (sultan), who is alleged to “rule over the land in the name of god and therefore promoted to a holy position”. The sultan is the symbol of the centralised and concentrated state power.

The class structure of Ottoman society

The social composition of Ottoman society consisted of a state ruling-class at the top and the direct producers at the bottom (agrarians and craftsmen). Both the agrarian communes and the craftsman guilds in towns were under tight control of the central state.

There was not, and could not be, a matured merchant class of Western type in the social organism of the Ottoman Empire. Almost all of the surplus was concentrated in the hands of the state and was used to satisfy the needs of the state. Thus there were no commodities left for private trade and free exchange. Under such conditions, accumulation of a merchant capital and formation of a merchant class within the system was impossible. The trade in Ottoman society consisted of long distance trade to satisfy the needs of the palace (of the despot), army and the high level military-civil bureaucracy, which inhabited the towns. However this kind of trade was performed, either by the officials charged by the state or by the merchants coming from abroad (who were not part of the Ottoman system). Thus, what the state did was the exchange of use-values to satisfy its needs rather than commodity trade.

As for the situation of producers at the bottom, who work in the agrarian communes that constitute the essential basis of the Ottoman economy, they were completely out of the economic and social life of the towns, and were living an isolated life. In these Asiatic agrarian communes, private property, commodity and exchange relations had never developed. A very low level of division of labour, the undivided unity of agriculture and crafts, and the satisfaction of every need from within the commune; all these kept these communities in a position of being self-sustaining and isolated economic units. Due to these features, the agrarian communes reproduced themselves and vegetated during hundreds of years under the Ottoman despotism.

Marx said that these Asiatic agrarian communes, innocent and harmless in appearance, formed the economic basis of Oriental despotism wherever they existed. The development of market and capitalist relations was impossible in a place where there was no private property and free exchange. Therefore, Marx pointed out, the inner dynamics that would develop capitalism were lacking in Eastern societies that were under the reign of an Asiatic mode of production, and that capitalism could break through only as a foreign agent in these societies.

The evolution of Ottoman society constitutes an outright contrast to the Western development. The state in the West has taken shape along with the evolution of

society itself, that is, according to the supremacy of the social classes in economic relationship. Yet, on the contrary, in the Ottoman society the social relations and classes were moulded in the hands of state.

The proportion of unproductive (parasitic) elements (officials in the palace, the top military and civil bureaucracy and the religious ulema) in the Ottoman society was bigger than that in the medieval European feudal societies. Thus they were to play an essential part in the formation of the towns in Ottoman society. But these towns were not the “autonomous towns” that had formed independently from the central authority in the West. On the contrary, they were built by the state itself and were some kind of administrative headquarters where the state-class populate. The necessity of satisfying the needs of the ruling class led to the organisation of industry and trade in these towns. But both industry and trade developed as a function of state rather than a private activity of independent individuals. Thus the industrial and trade activity were under the absolute control of the state in Ottoman towns. This uncompromising statism prevented the formation of a market system, and the development of exchange as in the West, for a long time. Thus the process of primitive capital accumulation and development of capitalist relations that was developing in the West in the 16th and 17th centuries could not be experienced in the Ottoman society.

In this kind of social structure the inner dynamics that would allow capitalism to develop was absent. As Engels said in an article he wrote in 1890 in *Neue Zeit*: “Indeed, just as all the Eastern rules, the Turkish rule is also incompatible with a capitalist society; because it is impossible to save the surplus from the stranglehold of tyrant governors and greedy pashas; here we can not see the first essential condition of bourgeois property, that is the security of merchant and his goods.”

Period of vacillation of Ottoman despotism

After the discovery of America and opening of new paths of trade, there was a process of rapid development of trade and of primitive accumulation of capital in Western Europe. Especially in Britain, where in the 16th and 17th centuries, the feudal production relations were dissolved, a new class (bourgeoisie) arose and the preconditions (manufacture) of the future industrial capitalism came into being. This period of mercantilism was accompanied by a policy of colonialism all over the world. This feverish process of capitalist development kept going on growing by leaps and bounds in 18th and 19th centuries.

Yet the situation of the Ottoman Empire was completely different in the same

period. Because of its stagnant structure the Ottoman state lost its power before the developing West and entered a period of standstill, beginning from the 17th century. The Asiatic land system of the Ottomans began to disintegrate in this period. Absence of new land conquests, the declining importance of Eastern trade routes, increased smuggling, inadequacy of agrarian production etc., led to decreases in the revenues of the Ottoman state. At the beginning of the 17th century the expenditures of the Ottoman state had inflated to a level of three fold its revenues. Being gripped in such a financial shortage the Ottoman treasury must have immediately recourse to new sources of revenue. But there was no source to be squeezed other than the land revenues. In order to raise the revenues the state was compelled to offer its right to collect taxes for sale by way of competitive bidding. Thus taking the administration of the lands from the hands of its military bureaucracy (sipahi), the state began to hand it over to private individuals who were called *multezim* (they were influential people who had accumulated individual wealth in some way or another). This was a very important development that would lead to the complete degeneration and dissolution of the Ottoman land system. So important, that the power to control the agrarian production and the surplus was changed. Now private individuals were replacing the state that had been directly expropriating the surplus in the agriculture, under the form of taxes. In this way new elements sharing the revenues of the state emerged. This situation would lead to the formation of new political forces alongside the state class (sultan and military-civil bureaucracy). After a while the property of the lands that essentially belonged to the state had de facto, though not de jure, passed to the hands of the *multezims*. Thus, along with the old Asiatic land system, based on state property, now a new land system (some kind of local despotism and landlordism), based on de facto property of private individuals (i.e. land usurpation) and relations of private exploitation had emerged. These influential people began to form their private armed forces with time and defy the central authority. From the 18th century on, the central authority (sultans) became increasingly desperate against this local despotism and its lords and was unable to overcome these centrifugal forces.

Other sections anxious to participate in obtaining the state owned lands were the high officials such as viziers, pashas, and provincial governors and the religious *ulema*, who were part of the state class itself. According to the Ottoman laws, these officials were prohibited from possessing individually, private land property. But the officials had found a solution to this obstacle. In the Ottoman Empire it was possible to allocate land to the “*waqfs*” (some sort of foundation) that were established for “religious charities” and “social solidarity”, and the right

to run the lands could be handed over to these waqfs. Having established such waqfs, the governors and pashas were able to get hold of the state owned lands through these waqfs. Thus the state owned lands began to be looted by the top state bureaucracy along with the local despots and lords in the provinces. In the economic history of Turkey this system of waqfs has played a very important role in looting the public property. Strangely enough, this system of waqfs has continued to exist in the history of republic, and is even still in existence under the wings of the bourgeois state. Possessing assets of millions of dollars and hundreds of undertakings, these state waqfs, that are the relics of the Ottoman tradition, still remain, able to be plundered by the ruling bureaucracy.

Of course the ones that suffered most from the spoilage of the Ottoman land system were the producers working on the soil (reaya). Reaya were formerly responsible only before the state and for paying the taxes, but now they were subjected to the merciless repression and exploitation of the local despots. Before long, this merciless repression and exploitation of local despots, landlords and usurer multezims (special tax collectors) became intolerable for the reaya. As a result of this transformation, the peasants left the soil and got unemployed in the 17th and 18th centuries. But because there was not an industrial development in the Ottoman system, capable of employing these masses ejected from the soil, they either formed gangs of bandits or went to the towns to form the unemployed herd of idlers. In the remote regions, far from the centre of the Empire, a complete anarchy, disorder and chaos prevailed.

The process of dissolution

A more substantial dissolution in the traditional structure of the Ottoman Empire took place in the 19th century, through its relations with Western capitalism. This process ended with the Ottoman Empire becoming a semi-colony and its collapse. Therefore we can say that the crucial role in the final dissolution of the Ottoman Empire was played by Western capitalism, which was an external agent.

With the 19th century the Ottoman market was opened to Western capitalism. At the same time the dependence of the state on Western bankers through foreign debts increased. On the other hand, the railways and a network of communication were established in the same period, by the foreign capital as the sine qua non basis for the development of a capitalist market. Maritime transportation, shipbuilding, the opening of some mines and factories for military purpose, etc. are some other developments in this period. Alongside these processes meas-

ures were taken to develop the private landed property, together with a growth of a comprador bourgeoisie, primarily composed of non-Muslims around the seaports

At the beginning of 20th century when capitalism reached its imperialist stage, this long process of dissolution of the Ottoman Empire entered its last phase. In this phase, the Ottoman Empire became a semi-colony in the real sense of the word, just like Iran and China. For example the Ottoman Bank that had been established by the French capitalism, gradually began to function as a central bank, taking over the management of the Ottoman currency. Likewise, after the severe debt crises, the Ottoman treasury was handed over to an international council called Düyün-u Umumiye (the General Debts), which was comprised of the representatives of the Western states.

But the Ottoman ruling class did not accept this process, which amounted to a general decline, passively, neither did it act in a monolithic manner. To keep up they were compelled to introduce reforms like those in Tsarist Russian, to reinforce state apparatus (most of all the army). All these developments led to the formation of roughly two wings within the Ottoman ruling class in general, which had opposite interests and views. Both these wings had the intention of saving the Ottoman state in their own ways. While one of them contended that this goal could be achieved by maintaining the old despotic traditions, the other one stood for the way of “Westernisation” and “modernisation”. Having materialised as the Young Turk movement, this reformist wing established its independent political organisation under the name of the Committee for Union and Progress. After a long process of struggles and clashes, this wing managed to take power in 1908 and proclaimed a constitutional monarchy. Almost all the cadres who would later lead the establishment of the bourgeois republic came out of this movement and organisation.

The nationalist leadership of the Committee for Union and Progress reckoned that the remedy for salvation was to approach the rising German imperialism, and to side with it in the world war. The rising German imperialism had established, at the expense of its imperialist rivals, a great influence over the Ottoman Empire and condemned it to a financial slavery at the turn of the century. The Ottoman state entered the world war with its weak economy and feeble armed forces, and was defeated and ruined. After the war the imperialist forces occupied all the lands of the Empire, except a small region in the central Anatolia. This led to the sharpening of contradictions within the Ottoman ruling class, and hence the decisive breakaway of the wing that would lead the establishment of

the bourgeois republic later.

The War of Independence and foundation of bourgeois republic: 1919-1923

The bourgeois republic was established in 1923, and this represented an historical turning point pertaining to the beginning of the development of capitalism in Turkey. For reasons we pointed out above, there was not a Western type capitalist development in the Ottoman society until the end of the First World War. Therefore a national bourgeoisie, as in the West, had not been developed adequately. Thus the officers of the Ottoman army were the only coherent force able to maintain the tradition of being the old “state class”, and took upon themselves the leadership of the national independence struggle against the European imperialist, who were occupying Anatolia after the First World War. First among these Ottoman pashas was Mustafa Kemal, who set out to create a Western type capitalist nation-state in the liberated parts of Anatolia. Thus the historical mission of the national bourgeoisie was to be carried out by the Ottoman pashas!

The establishment of a bourgeois republic and the transition to capitalism in Turkey was being carried out in the imperialist age. This period was also a historic period in which the great October Revolution broke the imperialist-capitalist chain. Establishment of the power of “workers and peasants” soviets had immediately become a source of inspiration for the liberation of oppressed peoples. Therefore the national independence struggle in Turkey, a neighbour of the USSR, developed under the influence of two different tendencies: October revolution and Bolsheviks on the one hand and bourgeois nationalism on the other.

This resulted in two separate movements for independence against the occupying imperialists. First was the nationalist movement led by Kemal, which was composed of the officers of the Ottoman army, Anatolian merchant bourgeoisie and big landowners from Anatolia. The second one, which was called the Green Army, was under the influence of the revolution in Russia and the peasant soviets, and it waged essentially a guerrilla war, basing itself primarily on the peasantry. This movement was also, to some extent, in contact with the still young communist movement.

The nationalist movement led by the Ottoman pashas and bureaucrats achieved its aims through successfully exploiting the new world balances created at the end of the world war and the existence of the Soviet Union. Although the im-

perialist powers occupied a large part of Anatolia, in fact they had been greatly weakened as a result of the world war. A great revolutionary unrest and revolt had arisen among the working class in Europe and also powerful movements of independence in the colonies, had begun to rise. Moreover a revolutionary International had been established under the leadership of the new revolutionary regime in Soviet Russia, which was trying to embrace and lead both these dynamics. Both the objective ground and the fear and threat caused by the Communist International and Soviet Union were disadvantageous factors weakening the ambitions of the imperialists. The nationalist leadership in Anatolia was skilful in stepping over this weakness of the imperialists, and at the same time in showing utmost zeal in toadying to the Soviet Union, and in getting vital financial and military aid from her.

The nationalist leadership, which behaved independently from the government in Istanbul under British occupation, created some sort of a situation of dual power, by establishing a new National Assembly and a government in Ankara as early as 1920. Yet even at this stage the nationalist movement led by Kemal started diplomatic contacts with British imperialism. In these contacts the British asked them to stay away from the Soviet Union, get rid of both the young communist movement and the guerrilla forces of the Green Army, composed of peasants. All these elements were liquidated at the turn of 1921, as the British had wished, and the Ankara government then achieved its aim of being invited to the conference held in London in February 1921.

Contrary to what is alleged, the regular army led by Kemal did not fight directly with the imperialist forces. After the London Conference Western occupation armies began to withdraw their forces from Anatolia. The so-called War of Independence was in fact a war against Armenians in the east and mostly against the Greek occupation in the west. Neither the British, who occupied Istanbul and its environs, nor the Italians who occupied the Aegean and the Mediterranean region, nor the French who occupied southern and south-eastern parts of Anatolia, were waged war against. Although there was a small-scale armed resistance against the French forces, we must remember that in reality those French troops were composed of Armenians.

After succeeding in defeating the Greeks (incidentally, the British gave up supporting the Greeks soon after the London Conference) in Western Anatolia, the government led by Mustafa Kemal in Ankara was recognised officially by the imperialist states, at the Lausanne Conference in 1923. With the proclamation of a republic (29 October 1923) three months after the Lausanne Agreement, which

had been signed in July, the birth of the Turkish bourgeois republic on the Anatolian soil, replacing the ruined Ottoman Empire, was accomplished.

The Turkish bourgeoisie was very weak and cowardly in its attempt to establish the Republic. It was struggling for its national independence against the imperialist West on the one hand, and yet was fearful of carrying out the requirements of the bourgeois democratic revolution on the other hand, because it feared a people's movement in Anatolia similar to the Soviet revolution. That's why the Turkish bourgeoisie did not totally abolish the old despotic, Asiatic state traditions of the Ottomans. On the contrary, it has taken them all, and mixed them together and garnished them with a little republican sauce. So the democratic content of the new bourgeois republic established by Mustafa Kemal was very weak. On the other hand, its oppressive and totalitarian character was very apparent.

Thus the social and political reforms necessary for modern capitalism to develop in Turkey were carried out from above, with Bismarckian methods! They were not the result of a radical bourgeois democratic revolution. The new bourgeois republic compromised with the landlords and shared the power with them. Therefore they followed a Prussian way of capitalist development until the 1960's. So the development of capitalism in Turkey has been an extremely belated, painful process.

The class base of the new political power was composed of the following elements: military-civil bureaucracy, which still maintained its traditional position (in the Ottoman fashion) of ruling class; merchant bourgeoisie; and big land owners in Anatolia. The hegemonic element in this ruling class block was the military-civil bureaucracy led by Kemal. The Kemalist power had already proclaimed, in the Economy Congress in 1923, that it would follow the capitalist way. By doing this the new government declared that it was in favour of a capitalist economy on the basis of liberal relations, and that it had no problem with the foreign capital. Accordingly, the Ankara government undertook responsibility for the Ottoman debts and gave assurances that during the six years ahead it would not touch the customs privileges and exemptions of the imperialist states, that they had obtained in Ottoman times.

The founding of the Communist Party of Turkey

The Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) was founded in 1920 as a section of the Comintern, under the direct influence of the October revolution. Its founding congress was held in Baku under the auspices of the Bolsheviks. But after only

one year, Mustafa Kemal's bourgeois nationalist movement, in agreement with British imperialism, was to carry out several conspiracies against the fledgling Turkish communist party. It was terrified at the prospects of the growth of the Turkish CP and the possibility of a worker-peasant revolution leading to a soviet type government. And in one conspiracy, 15 leading members of the CP, including the first secretary-general of the party, Mustafa Suphi, were killed on 28 January 1921 by being drowned in the dark waters of the Black Sea.

This page of history is a complete tragedy for Turkish communists. The bourgeois nationalist movement of Mustafa Kemal was following a hypocritical policy of secret agreements with imperialism to crush the Turkish communist movement, by resorting to intrigues and conspiracies, whilst at the same time it pretended to be an anti-imperialist, populist movement, seeking help from the Soviet Union. And unfortunately it was quite successful in its tactics. In fact this historical reality was a striking example of the mistake of trusting the bourgeoisie in national liberation movements and of regarding it as an ally. A similar example would be experienced by the Soviet Union in China with Chiang Kai-shek.

As a matter of fact, the socialist movement in Turkey could not understand, for a long time, the mission of the Bismarckian type bourgeois leader Mustafa Kemal, and the real character of Kemalism. The fundamental weakness of the great majority of the left in Turkey is a conception of anti-imperialism without an anti-capitalist content. That is why the left in Turkey considered Kemal's movement as really anti-imperialist for years, and even today there is sympathy for Kemalism among the left. Another misconception of the left is to equate, more or less, the state capitalism of Kemalism with socialism. So the left movement in general considered as its duty to look after that statism, which nurtured the capitalism in Turkey and provided the native bourgeoisie with capital accumulation. What a pity! But it's the reality. This is a most important point. Because of this mistaken approach towards Kemalism, the Turkish left are blind in many spheres, particularly in the Kurdish question, where they have assumed a chauvinist attitude up until today.

The history of bourgeois republic in Turkey is the history of never-ending persecutions, prohibitions and state terror on the working class and socialist movement. For example, the Turkish Communist Party [TKP], the oldest left party of Turkey, during its 70 years history could legally work only 2 years. The rest was under conditions of illegality and secrecy.

The TKP followed the official Stalinist Soviet line throughout almost its whole

existence. Although some opposition groups did emerge in the TKP in the past, none of them could break with Stalinism. There was only one exception to this in the history of the TKP, which was the “Workers’ Opposition”, organised in 1932 and supported by the great Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet. But this opposition group was accused of being Trotskyist, and liquidated by the Stalinist party leadership.

The first phase of the Kemalist power: 1923-1930

The economic policies pursued in the first years of the bourgeois state were liberal economic policies, in the framework of seeking to develop its relations with the Western capitalism. The main purpose of these policies was to create a national economy, by proceeding along capitalist development. But there was neither a national bourgeois class nor an adequate accumulation of capital in Turkey, to initiate the capitalist investments. Therefore, the centrality of the economic policies of the state during this period was to encourage and support private capitalist entrepreneurship. The young bourgeois state, established under the leadership of the Ottoman officers, wanted to prevent the capital that had been flowing to Europe, sent by the non-Muslim comprador bourgeois, from leaving Turkey. It was the native bourgeoisie in Turkey that should use this capital, and for investment in Turkey, rather than have it continue to flow to the West.

The political power remained largely in the hands of military-civil bureaucrat cadres during this period. These cadres were in a sense patronising the nascent national bourgeoisie. This is a peculiar aspect of the process of capitalist development in Turkey. Their aim was to create a bourgeois class and a bourgeois state of Western type. And the same state cadres established the Republican People’s Party (CHP) for this purpose.

But despite both liberal policies and the enactment of encouraging laws, neither a capitalist industrial advancement nor a desired level of a “national” bourgeois class could be created. There was not an adequate amount of native capital accumulation for this, and there was not an inflow of foreign capital from the West either. Although the Kemalist general policy aimed at Westernisation (which means to become a capitalist country), the Western capitalist states still approached with caution the young Turkish Republic. As a result, during this first phase, Turkey remained largely an “agrarian country” with pre-capitalist production relations.

In these first years some super-structural reforms, which formed the framework

of capitalist development, were carried out. Pioneering this movement of reforms, Mustafa Kemal presented the aim of the young bourgeois republic as follows: “to reach the contemporary level of Western civilisation”. But these “Westernisation” reforms, tried by Mustafa Kemal in the social sphere, were indeed difficult to be acquired by a society that is the continuation of Ottoman society. Moreover, for these reforms to be viable there must have been appropriate transformations on the base (industrialisation, land reform etc.). But these were the ones that Turkey lacked! Landlordism was still there, especially in Eastern and South-eastern parts (Turkish Kurdistan). However, rather than liquidating this landlordism, the Kemalist bureaucracy had allied itself with this landlordism. Therefore, most of the super-structural reforms in the social sphere remained as superficial reforms, that could not go beyond formal limits and that are “alien to the people”.

The capitalist world crisis and the period of “state capitalism” in Turkey: 1930-1946

In the year 1930 the economic plight of the young Turkish Republic was not promising at all, and this was during the period of the outbreak of the deep crisis of the world capitalist system [1929-1933]. This crisis affected the Turkish economy through its foreign trade. Since the exports of Turkey were primarily based on agriculture, decreases in the prices of agricultural products lessened the revenues of both the state and the landowners. Turkish currency lost its value significantly in this period. Moreover, the Turkish treasury was in difficulty owing to Turkey commencing to pay the Ottoman debts at this unfortunate time! These debts devoured nearly one tenth of the budget.

These unfavourable conditions forced the young bourgeois state to develop a new economic strategy. And this strategy involved the direct intervention of the state on economic life (statism) to start the industrialisation and to build a national economy. And the mood of the military-civil bureaucrat cadres, who were in the hegemonic position in the state, was also similarly inclined to implement this strategy. Because they had already been in the position of a ruling class, now they found themselves as both the owner of the state and the protector of the society. The Kemalist bureaucracy believed that a “national” capitalism in Turkey could only be established through the state. The world conjuncture reinforced them in this view. The economy of the Soviet Union, a neighbouring state, which seemed to be based on statism, was not significantly influenced by the crisis, but on the

contrary, kept on growing, and Turkey's leaders were noticing the growth of the USSR during this period.

Under these conditions the Turkish state started to prepare its first five years' economic plans, similar in a sense to those in the Soviet Union. This period, extending from 1930 to 1946, was a period of absolute "statism" that existed in all spheres of the economy. The political life was under the one-party dictatorship of the official state party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), which represented the rule of the bureaucracy. Although the name of the party included the word "People" it had nothing to do with the people and its interests. On the contrary, this party was the representative of the block of "bureaucracy-bourgeoisie-big landowners", against the working people.

Capitalism developed in this period under state management and guidance. Therefore there was no competitive period of capitalism in Turkey, contrary to the West. In this period state enterprises spread rapidly and their share of the industry in the economy doubled. Until 1950, banking, big industrial institutions, mining, energy, chemistry, transportation, communication, textile, alcoholic drinks, cigarette (tobacco) etc. were run by the state. The basic and long term aim of this practice of statism and "state capitalism", was to create the ground for the development of a native capitalist industry and a "national bourgeois" class, by means of a rapid capital accumulation, through overexploitation of labour inside the nation.

This statism in these years was implemented in an utmost authoritarian and repressive political framework, and the labouring masses were not permitted to have a say, nor there was a worthwhile improvement in their standards of life. But the state could implement this capitalist policy, based on overexploitation of labour, only under the veil of a general rhetoric of "populism" and "anti-imperialism". These practises of Kemalist power were supported by some of the leaders of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) that was by then a Stalinist party. They (among them was the then General Secretary of the party) wanted the party to tail end the Kemalist power. Some of these leaders left the party to publish a paper (Kadro, meaning cadre) in support of the statism of CHP. They applauded this state capitalism as a populist and anti-imperialist policy, disregarding the bourgeois nationalist class nature of Kemalist power. They defended the following idea: "Our statism is such a national statism that it is not based on any class and can be an example for the peoples of the world that wage an independence war." This profound illusion, that identifies statism with socialism and classless society, has remained alive in left movements in Turkey from that period, and

still exists today!

After Mustafa Kemal's death in 1938, who had been previously proclaimed as "the eternal chief", there did not occur even the slightest change in the structure of the one-party dictatorship, and another ex-Ottoman pasha, Ismet Inonu, given the title of "national chief", rose to the presidency.

Although Turkey did not participate in the Second World War, the labouring masses were drawn into unprecedented misery, as if they were in a war. Steep increase in military expenditures, shrinkage of production by 5-6% on a yearly basis, recruitment of the productive population largely to the army, with proliferation of war profiteering all over the country, aggravated the misery and deprivation. Moreover the labouring masses were tormented under a system of severe repression and terror. And the minorities living in Turkey, such as Greeks, Armenians, Jews etc., also got their share of this repression. Their properties and assets were seized, many of them being exiled to labour camps as a result of operations like the one carried out under the title of "Tax on Wealth", reminiscent of Nazi Germany.

These conditions, together with economic and political measures taken against some sections of the ruling class, aggravated the discontent and contradictions within society, preparing the way for the political splitting of the ruling class block in the aftermath of the war.

It should be noted that although Turkey did not take side in the war, she did not refrain from making her preparations to sell herself to the imperialist camp that would probably be victorious. For example, they let a racist fascist tendency develop within the state, which was in collaboration with the Nazis, just in case of a victory of Nazi Germany. Only after it became clear that Germany would be the loser was this current liquidated.

Post-war period: new world balances and Turkey (1946-1950)

Since Turkey followed an unreliable attitude during the Second World War, and did not take part in the war against Nazism alongside her European allies, her position was regarded as ambiguous by the allies. But once the defeat of Germany became certain, Turkey hypocritically declared war against Germany, in order to compensate for her slippery record. This declaration was made very late, just before the collapse of Germany itself.

In the new world juxtaposition, the Turkish ruling class was to find that it was facing a considerable changed world relationship. Liberal winds were blowing in Europe after the defeat of Fascism, and Turkey was thus compelled to introduce liberal measures of her own in the political sphere, in order to adapt to these changes. The Turkish bourgeoisie, faced with serious economic problems, was desperate for economic aid from Western capitalism, and in this context she was especially keen to approach the American Imperialism. However, appreciating that a one-party dictatorship could not be continued in this new world conjuncture, in 1946 Turkey was compelled to accept the establishment of new political parties.

In short, both the new circumstances all over the world, and the new relationship with the US imperialism, would have their repercussions on the political life in the coming period. As a result the CHP, which had been dominated by the bureaucracy, now ceased to be acceptable for some sections of the ruling class (especially for big landowners and merchants). Therefore the coalition that had been formed by the ruling classes around the CHP underwent an essential split. The big landowners and merchants left the CHP and formed the Democratic Party (DP). The creation of the DP was an essential step by the big landowners and merchants to free themselves from the political patronage of the Kemalist bureaucracy. And in 1950, with the coming to power of the Democrat Party, the one-party dictatorship of the CHP, that had lasted almost 30 years, came to an end. It also meant the closing of a period in the history of republic.

Having been sick of the severe oppression of the one-party dictatorship, the broad popular masses had voted for the Democratic Party in the 1950 elections, and carried it to the parliament with an overwhelming majority. Yet the DP, reflecting the interests of the big landowners and capitalists, was in fact a genuine party of the existing order. Since the regime did not permit any other alternatives to appear before the people, they clung to the DP to get rid of the CHP at all costs. The DP was used to channel the anger of the masses by pretending to be in favour of democracy and liberties. Yet quite soon after its victory the DP proved that it was as capable of being as cruel an enemy of the working class and the left in general, as was the CHP during its long dictatorship.

In 1946 some left parties had also been established, along with the DP. For example, the TKP had created two legal socialist parties, because it was still illegal to create a political party with the word “communist” in its title. One of them was the “Socialist Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey” and the other was the “Socialist Party of Turkey”. However the cowardly and slippery Turkish bourgeoisie

was soon to demonstrate how intolerant it was of left parties. With the Kemalist CHP still in power, whilst still claiming that liberal reforms were being carried out, it closed these two socialist parties just six months after their launch.

On the other hand, the Turkish working class also made use of the new political conjuncture after the war, and established legal unions. It was the first time that labour unions were permitted since the beginning of the Republic. Hundreds of local unions were established and thousands of workers were organised in these unions. It was clear that this union movement was going to flourish. But the Turkish bourgeoisie panicked. After just six months, the legal unions established by socialists and communists were closed and their officers were arrested. Thus the bourgeoisie managed to suppress this emerging union movement.

The history of the Turkish republic has been a history of hindrance, prohibition and oppression from the standpoint of the economic and social rights of the working class. A Labour Act, setting the legal framework of industrial relations, was passed only 13 years after the proclamation of the Republic in 1936. Nevertheless this law did not include the right to set up unions, collective bargaining or going on strike. Only in 1947 did the workers win the right to set-up unions. Even then the right to go on strike and collective bargaining were made illegal. These were achieved only in 1963, 40 years after the proclamation of a Republic. On the other hand, the bourgeois state did not permit any legal socialist parties until 1960. However, the articles that prohibited the “communist propaganda”, taken from Mussolini’s fascist penal code in 1936, were not abolished until 1990, and even after these specific acts were abolished, the articles taken from Mussolini’s penal code were incorporated into the new acts, containing the same prohibitions.

The period of Democratic Party rule: 1950-1960

As a result of an economic policy in favour of big landowners and import-export merchants, a frenzied capitalist development in agriculture took place in this period, and the increase in agricultural production resulted in a widening of the sources of foreign debt. This frantic development of agriculture and also a considerable advance in industrialisation was dependant on the development of the world economic conjuncture. The driving force of this development in 1950s was the opening of new lands to agriculture, and the use of advanced techniques in agriculture, that is, the development of capitalism in agriculture.

As for the developments in the political sphere, the liquidation of the traditional

military-civil bureaucrat cadres from the state administration –who were in favour of full-fledged intervention of the state in the economy– began in this period, when the political power passed to the coalition of merchant bourgeoisie and big land owners. But the conflict between the traditional block that was in favour of interventionism in the economy, and the bourgeois section that was in favour of liberalism, continued without reaching an accommodation.

Relations between Turkey and the US imperialism became much closer. Affiliation to NATO (1952), the US's decision to include Turkey into the Marshall Plan, formation of CENTO etc., all these took place in this period. And also in this period Turkey actively supported the US's cold war policy through sending troops to the Korean War, and became one of the closest allies of the US in the Middle East.

As for the class relations, the Turkish state sought to control the trade union movement because they considered that on the existing level of capitalist development it was not possible to stop the trade union movement of the working class other than through continued prohibitions and oppressive measures. Thus, with the guidance of the US, they had the Confederation of Turkish Labour Unions (Turk-İş) organised in 1952, which would operate under state control. This organisation had some semi-official status and sought to install an American style business trade unionism on the Turkish working class, plus liberal amounts of finance from the USA, with the Turkish Ministry of Labour playing midwife to its birth. It made great strides in recruiting the public sector workers into Turk-İş

The period between 1950 and 1955 is a period of extreme liberalism. But it also prepared the preconditions for an economic and financial crisis that was on the horizon. The bourgeois government had increased the foreign debts to a great extent and followed a one-sided policy of investment, primarily in agricultural investments, counting on the revenues from agricultural exports. This suited the interests of the imperialist capital, with both the US and the European capitalist preferring to lending money with high interest rates, and making profit from selling their goods, instead of direct investments. And this would soon draw Turkey into a downright economic and financial impasse.

The first serious crisis of Turkish capitalism broke out in 1958. Both a financial and foreign debts crisis prepared the way for the overthrow of DP rule. Foreign trade deficit reached 60% of the total exports. The import of the necessary inputs for industry (machines, equipment, raw material) became impossible. Thus the investments decreased and the economy shrunk, and social expenditures were

reduced. Finally, Turkey fell into such a position that she could not repay her foreign debts. Of course the labouring classes suffered the most from these developments. But on the other hand the conditions of the lower rank officers in the army and the other officials within other state departments were also worsened on a daily basis.

The DP continued to pump finance from state funds and banks to the big landowners, despite the economic crisis, yet it did not support the industrial capitalists adequately. Naturally this caused a reaction among the industrial bourgeoisie. Foolishly the DP also alienated the army by cutting the grants of the military bureaucracy and weakening their political influence.

The industrial bourgeoisie had had enough and was seeking a way to remove the domination of the big landowners. Coincidentally, the imperialists were also in favour of putting an end to the power of the big landowners, which was an obstacle to the capitalist development of Turkey. Imperialism now supported the implementing of a planned capitalist development, under the lead of the industrial bourgeoisie. But it was also clear that such an essential transformation in the economy could not be brought about whilst the DP ruled, because they were not in favour of such a development.

The new period opened by Military Coup of May 27: 1960-1970

Many large student demonstrations erupted against the government in the last days of DP rule, giving rise to major contradictions within the urban middle and working classes, very soon to be followed by a coup by the middle and lower ranking officers. Not long after this coup the ex- Prime Minister Menderes and two of his prominent ministers were summarily tried and hanged. Whatever else it achieved, both the Turkish industrial bourgeoisie and imperialism welcomed this coup, because, whatever the intentions of these lower ranking officers, it was ultimately to their benefit, in the long term, that the coup had taken place.

In the opinion of these officers, they had carried out a revolution to defend and protect the liberties and institutions of the Republic, introduced by Ataturk, and against the undemocratic practices of the DP! Nevertheless, these “revolutionary” officers quickly outlined their real intentions, in the first political statement they made immediately after the coup: “We are respectful to all international treaties. We are loyal to NATO and CENTO.” Such a statement from a “revolu-

tionary” junta must have quickened the hearts of the imperialist, assuring both the US and the Europeans that it was business as usual and that there was no need to worry!

Shortly after the coup, the CHP, the party created by Mustafa Kemal, was called on by the officers to take power. The CHP represented the urban bourgeoisie gathered around İş Bankası (meaning Business Bank) –which was, and still is, almost the biggest bank of Turkey, partly owned by CHP itself– and the bourgeois intelligentsia and military-civil bureaucracy. These circles wanted a planned capitalist industrialisation to be launched (they called it “mixed economy”), and also for foreign capital to be attracted. For this they founded a “state planning organisation”, to prepare a five year plan with the help of the imperialist West. Through these plans it was intended to carry out the liquidation of pre-capitalist production relations, a land reform and a transfer of resources from agriculture to the industry, which was basically a measure against the big landowners.

After this brief excitement, the regular routine of the parliamentary regime in Turkey began to operate, including the electoral process, and in 1965 the Justice Party [AP] came to power. Though it had been founded as an extension of the DP, now, unlike in the past, it also represented the industrial bourgeoisie. The AP followed the policy of giving priority to industry, especially to the assembly-line industry. This led to the inevitable growth in concentration and centralisation of capital.

The year 1960 is an important turning point from the point of view of the development of both capitalism and also of the development of the working class movement, into a mass movement. A new constitution had been launched as a result of the military coup on 27th May 1960. A new period was opened, with the coming of a relative democratisation in both political and social life.

During the first 40 years of the republic, the native bourgeoisie flourished thanks to the capital accumulation supplied by state capitalism. And it started private industrial investments. The private capitalist industry developed by leaps and bounds in this period. And parallel with this, the working class began to grow rapidly and stir as well. In the 60’s the whole society showed a tendency to prosper politically and culturally. All sections of the society began to set up its organisations, associations, co-operatives, etc. For the first time for 40 years the prohibited and suppressed leftist books began to be published publicly. The socialist ideas attracted attention of the broad intellectual sections. Although these developments began an unstructured process, with leaps and bounds, how be-

lated a process it was compared to the history of the proletarian movements in European countries!

There were important developments concerning the working class movement after 1960. In 1961 a legal socialist party TIP (Workers Party of Turkey) was founded, which would become the first mass party in the history of the republic. It was founded by trade unionists at first and then joined by socialist intellectuals. Attracting immediately the attention of the active workers in the unions, from the very beginning TIP was very popular, both in the towns and in the rural areas. In 1965 the TIP achieved the election of 15 Members to Parliament, taking advantage of the more democratic system then available. These successes encouraged the workers, and in 1963 a Code of Strike and Collective Bargaining was won. The working class continued its struggles after 1963, encouraged by its successes. At this time there was only the state controlled confederation, Turk-Is, and it became quickly apparent that it was unable and unwilling to support the rising economic struggles of the working class. It proved itself alien to the cause of the workers, and very soon a strong opposition developed within the Turk-Is itself. The new generation of workers and their leaders were critical about the kind of unionism that is servile to the bourgeois state, under the guise of “supra-party and non-political unionism”, and they sought to open a new channel for the trade union struggle. Four unions (Maden-Is, Lastik-Is, Basın-Is, Gıda-Is) were expelled from Turk-Is and founded a new confederation, the DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Workers’ Unions) in February 1967. These unions had always been in the forefront of the struggles and organised particularly in the private sector.

The DISK became a centre of attraction in the union struggle all around Turkey, and also became a focus of the socialist circles working within the proletariat. And then another important turning point in the history of the Turkish working class was reached: the year 1968.

The actions of youth and the wave of general strikes in Europe in 1968 immediately influenced the youth in Turkey and mobilised them. And the wave of struggles of the working class that begun at that time, also went beyond the legal framework of the bourgeoisie, increasing in intensity and breadth, using such tactics as factory occupations, boycotts, and outlawed strikes. Although they were developed spontaneously they all contained a revolutionary essence. These were immediately accompanied by the rising demands of the youth in favour of national independence and the demonstrations and land occupations of the peasants in the rural areas. The DISK got stronger, and also the workers belong-

ing to Turk-Is began struggling to leave it and become members of the DISK.

In 1968 the only legal mass left party was TIP. Many leftist circles and individuals, having different political tendencies were carrying out political work within this party. The illegal TKP, on the other hand, did not try a separate organisation until 1973 and it worked within TIP, too. In fact the majority of the leaders of TIP were the old TKP members. In spite of this, there was a complete gap between the old cadres of TKP and young generations, ignorant of the history of the TKP. Yet the TKP was the oldest, and in some senses the historical party of the Turkish working class, and continued to have an effect, directly or indirectly, on many political formations in Turkey, not excluding the TIP.

In the 60s, in the process of political mobilisation in Turkey, guerrillaism and Maoism began to be organised, particularly within the youth movement, as in many other countries at that time. Because of this and other factors, TIP, which had united various left fractions in its body at first, gradually began to experience a chronic split. Since then there has never been a comparable mass legal party of the working class in Turkey, as in the first growth period of TIP. An unfortunate but inevitable split took place within the TIP: guerrillaism and Maoism on the one side and the proletarian revolutionists who continued to defend working in the proletarian organisations, on the other side.

At this time the state started to organise the religious reactionary movements and direct them against workers and students, in order to suppress the rising left movement. The Arab-American oil companies –like ARAMCO– in the Middle East, directly financed these reactionary organisations.

The bourgeoisie began preparing to attack not only the trade union organisations of the working class, but also against union rights in general. The bourgeois government started the attack by bringing forward legislative measures to close the DISK, and the working class immediately responded with massive count-attacks. On June 15 and 16 a workers demonstration took place, involving over 150,000 workers in Istanbul and Izmit. These dates, June 15 and 16, 1970 are very significant dates in the history of struggle of the Turkish working class. The streets of Istanbul and Izmit, which are the cradle of the modern Turkish working class, were shaken by the strength and virility of the demonstrations during these two days. On those days, the bosses either hid themselves in their homes or immediately left Istanbul. The police and army attacked the workers with guns, resulting in 3 deaths and over 200 injured. Martial law was declared, prohibiting the masses from leaving their homes, implementing a virtual curfew! This curfew was to

last for two months, in an attempt to suppress all demonstrations, but despite all these measures it could not break the resolve of the working class, now rising on an enthusiasm for change. Never before had there been such a strong left wing wind blowing.

1970-1980: The period of the monopolisation of capital in Turkey

This period is the period of the acceleration of the monopolisation in industry. The fusion of bank and industrial capital, the formation of finance-capital groups like in the West, and the rise of their role in politics, took place in this period. And the differentiation among the capitalist class developed further. For example, the big bourgeoisie that is based on bank and industrial capital created its own separate organisation, TUSIAD, which is now called “Club of Riches” in Turkey. It was established in 1970 and has become a decisive element on political power ever since.

The distinctive characteristic of capitalist development in this period is the implementation of an industrialisation model, based on foreign debts and “import substitution”. The concrete expression of this was the rapid development in assembly-line industry in the 1970s. For example, the automobile industry and durable consumer goods industry in Turkey were installed as assembly-line industries from the beginning. The components were imported from abroad and then assembled here. Those capitalists who invested in these industries made a huge capital accumulation in a short period of time through giving very low wages to the workers and increasing the rate of exploitation.

The Military Coup of 12 March 1971

Having considered that it had managed to pacify the working class through oppressive policies since the beginning of the republic, the Turkish bourgeoisie felt comfortable for a long period of time. However, when the bourgeoisie saw that the opposition of the working class was growing by leaps and bounds in a period of relative freedom, then it immediately began to develop a strategy to counteract this opposition. Thus, after only ten years, a second military coup came. The fact that the workers’ movement had developed by leaps and bounds and became increasingly militant, with the anti-American acts of the youth increasing etc., scared both the ruling classes in Turkey and the US imperialism. Moreover,

the currents of anti-Americanism and national independence had also been developing within the army. The ruling powers found the solution in staging another military coup (12 March 1971) and closed the parliament. As it was first portrayed as a leftist coup, certain petit-bourgeois revolutionists were extremely misled. In fact it was a reactionary (rightist) coup, carried out under the guidance of the US!

In this period of extraordinarily oppressive, semi-military regimes, between 1971 and 1974, both the workers' movement and the developing socialist movement received a harsh blow. The only legal party of the working class, TIP, was closed. The activities of the trade unions that were DISK affiliates, and the youth associations, were banned. Thousands of socialist intellectuals, workers, revolutionary youths, unionists etc. were arrested and tortured. The leftist movement was completely disintegrated and the organisations scattered. The Turkish bourgeois state hanged three leaders of the youth movement, who were university students at the age of just above 20, on the charge of violating the constitution. The aim of the bourgeoisie was to intimidate the revolutionary youth and to isolate the socialists and revolutionaries from the people. The Turkish bourgeoisie turned this extraordinary political regime (oppressive police state practices) almost into a regular regime in order not to give a respite to the working class.

This period of the second military dictatorship lasted 3 years and it was the rehearsal of the bourgeoisie for the military fascist regime of September 12, 1980. It had drawn many lessons for its own sake, not least the introduction of new prohibitions to obstruct the development of the left. It changed the relatively more liberal Constitution of 1961 entirely, by abolishing all the democratic articles of the old constitution. It introduced new anti-socialist articles into the Penal Code. On the other hand, it dressed the People's Party, the 50-years old state party, to make it seem like a social democratic party, to mislead the working class. The architect of this manipulation was the Prime Minister Ecevit.

After 1973 and the rising workers' movement

In 1973 new elections were held and in 1974 Ecevit's seemingly left party came to power. A new political conjuncture was to begin, both for the bourgeoisie and the left. The left movement was now entirely disintegrated and split into tens of new organisations.

Ideologically and politically there were two main tendencies among this disintegrated left. First, the traditional Stalinist left tendency that aimed at organising

among the working class and trade union movement, and followed the line of the official CPSU. Secondly, the revolutionary populist tendency, which was organised among the student youth, and the petty bourgeois layers of towns and provinces. Of course the ideological nurturing source of this tendency was also Stalinism. Their political line was embodied in Maoism and guerrillaism.

Unfortunately, there was not an internationalist communist tendency, organised on the basis of revolutionary Marxism, in that period. Although there were some tiny intellectual circles defending Trotsky's ideas and criticising Stalinism, they could not form an active political organisation among the left movement, or even a current of thought, because the Stalinist current was so very strong among the Turkish left movement, and the conception of "Stalinist state socialism" was so widely accepted among the socialist intellectuals. At the time, among the leftists of Turkey there was, and still is, a strong negative prejudice against Trotsky and Trotskyism. In their opinion Trotsky is an "enemy of Leninism", "an adventurist", "a traitor", etc.

In 1973 the TKP, which had existed only as an external bureau in Moscow for years, decided to organise anew on an illegal basis within the country. This was a big step forward for the TKP, but even with illegality it enjoyed a rapid and improving popularity. The principal reason for this was, that, beside its illegal organisation, it had also created a broad legal mass movement on its periphery, which was able to affect the trade union movement to a great extent, by dominating the leadership of DISK. Between 1970 and 1980 many members of this illegal TKP managed to be elected to the executive committees of many unions and legal mass organisations. Alongside there were also legal associations of youth, teachers, technical employees, and women, having tens of thousands of members, founded directly under the party's control. And of course, there were hundreds of secret party cells composed of workers in the factories.

This method of organising by the TKP was, as a matter of fact, correct. Unfortunately, both its political line and leadership were entirely social reformist and class collaborationist. Because the leadership of the TKP was dependent on the Soviet bureaucracy, and followed the line decided by Moscow without challenge, the inevitable result was a split in the party, between those wishing to take a more revolutionary road and the reformist. At this time there were many legal and illegal socialist parties formed, but none of them had the effect on the workers movements as did the TKP.

In the period between 1970 and 1980 the growth in the working class movement

was unprecedented, and at the same time, socialist ideas were spreading among the working class. The DISK, under the direction of the TKP, organised for the first time a mass rally in 1976 to celebrate the Mayday, which had been prohibited for the past 50 years, and driven almost entirely out of the proletariat's mind. 200 thousand people joined the rally and the trade union movement organised strikes, which were the most prolonged strikes in the history of Turkey. The most militant union of DISK, the union of metal workers, started the strikes, which covered 120 factories in the private sector, with 40 thousand workers, and would last 11 months. A wide and strong solidarity movement formed around these strikes. The youth movement, the movement of labouring women, intellectuals' etc. all kept solidarity watch around the strike tents, together with the striking workers, during the months of the strikes. The strikers families were not isolated and left to themselves, but were offered support from all these groups.

The Turkish bourgeoisie were terrified at these events and correctly anticipated that even larger numbers would support the next Mayday celebrations. There was now a leftward swing in the industrial and political perspectives, the bourgeoisie could see it, and in May 1977 over 500 thousand people, from every section of society, took part in the Mayday celebrations. However the bourgeoisie had already taken its counter measures, preparing every kind of provocation in order to obstruct the moving leftwards of the masses, coinciding with the growth of the trade union power. In this counter-revolutionary action the Turkish bourgeoisie was aided by US imperialism's secret services.

This great Mayday rally was to witness a bloody provocation, staged by the American and Turkish secret services, when the 500 thousand demonstrators were subjected deliberately to volley fire by contra-guerrilla teams, placed in the surrounding buildings. The shooting, or being run over by special police vehicles, killed around 40 workers.

The memory of the Mayday of 1977 has never been forgotten in the minds of the workers and revolutionaries, and is an historical event, when the Turkish and American bourgeoisie set out to massacre workers and revolutionaries demonstrating their solidarity. And to celebrate the Mayday, whatever the circumstances, has become a tradition for the revolutionaries of Turkey.

The political atmosphere began to change after 1977 Mayday, with the bourgeoisie stepping up its counter-revolutionary provocations. Once more, it was preparing to block the rising of the leftward movement with a military coup, as it always does. But before that, the false social democrat Bulent Ecevit and his party,

the Republican People's Party (CHP), started anticommunist attacks. Ecevit was already preparing to break the influence of the TKP in DISK and to pacify DISK.

On the other hand, workers' leaders and revolutionaries began to be attacked by paramilitary-armed gangs, lead by the fascist MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) in the cities, especially in the working class districts. They began to kill selectively the known figures in the revolutionary struggle and in the workers' movement. Death lists were being published in the fascist papers, naming the people being targeted for the next murder. And then political assassinations by these contra-guerrilla forces, trained by the CIA, began targeting important political figures. Everyday dozens of people were being killed. A complete mass pacification was intended in this way. In this process and in the counter-revolutionary campaign nearly 5.000 people were killed.

Eventually, they killed the president of DISK, Kemal Turkler, who was the leader of the metal workers. The Metal workers are the leading section of the Turkish working class, and Kemal Turkler was well known and respected by the whole working class and his assassination meant an important turning point along the road to the military coup. There were over 500 thousand workers in his funeral from both Istanbul and outside Istanbul, unionised workers and non-unionised workers. But unfortunately the working class movement lacked a really revolutionary leadership, which would carry the struggle forward and resist the military coup. The bureaucratic leadership of the TKP was retreating to a position of complete surrender, compromising shamefully with the Ecevit government. The TKP tried to play the role of a priest pacifying the working class.

The military coup of September 12

Under these unfavourable circumstances the working class movement began to retreat, becoming pacified after Mayday 1977, and the result was a mixture of horror, pacifism and exhaustion on a mass scale, just as the putschists intended. The Turkish bourgeoisie had decided to control the economic and political crisis, intensified just before 1980, by tanks, cannons and guns. And in September 12, 1980 Turkey witnessed the third military coup. The Constitution and the parliament was abolished, all parties, including also the bourgeois parties, were closed. The party leaders were arrested, the DISK was shut down, unionists were arrested, and all the collective agreements signed by unions were cancelled, and then the workers wages were frozen. In the 12th September coup, the military dictatorship arrested tens of thousands of people who were then tortured, with hun-

dreds killed, hanged and disabled. Here are some figures:

- 650 thousand people were arrested, the majority of them were tortured,
- Over 50 thousand people were forced to migrate to European countries as political immigrants,
- 700 death sentences were demanded, 480 of them sentenced to death, 216 were suspended in the parliament, 48 were hanged,
- Around 200 people were killed under torture,
- 23,677 association were banned.

The military coup of 12th September is the counter-revolutionary response of the bourgeoisie to the rising leftward movement of the working class and left political movements. This fascist military regime has not only saved the bourgeoisie from its impasse, but also restructured the bourgeois political order on reactionary bases, the effects of which are still continuing now. While an impression was being given that, with the calling of parliamentary elections in 1983, the military regime had ended, in reality nothing has changed in Turkey. Unable to smother their fear of the working class and the left, the bourgeoisie is still trying to maintain its oppressive regime by dressing it with a so-called parliament. But even this cannot save the bourgeois order from its impasse; on the contrary, it brings it deeper into the swamp. Now the bourgeoisie with its so-called parliamentary regime can neither deceive the people at home nor the world. Therefore it is struggling desperately in its economic, social and political crises.

In short, the various experiences of the past experienced by the European countries; rise and fall in the workers' movement, massacres, fascist attacks, bloody military dictatorships, etc.; all were experienced successively and intensively within last 40 years in Turkey.

One of the objectives of the 12 September regime has been to surpass the domestic market oriented capital accumulation regime, which was prevalent until the 80s. The "24 January Decrees" that were the symbol of the military regime in the economic sphere, have given way to a new economic structuring, oriented towards exports. The Ozalist line (the Turkish version of Thatcherism) that overturned all obstacles to restructuring, has taken many serious steps towards the integration of Turkey to imperialism. One of these steps is the question of membership to the EU, which is still a big problem.

The development of capitalism in Turkey took a different path from the classical

path in the West. It is not the civil political forces that marked the foundation of the bourgeois republic, but mainly the military bureaucracy. For this reason the bourgeois regime in this land has never worked like the bourgeois democracy in the West. Whenever felt in trouble in the face of any escalation of the struggle of the working class and the toiling masses, the bourgeoisie has called on the military to its rescue and abandoned the political arena to an extra-ordinary form of regime wherein the military rules supreme. It was also the case when the bourgeoisie carried on its affairs taking refuge behind its traditional saviour, i.e. the military, and the military-fascist regime throughout the period of feverish structural change of Turkish capitalism in the 1980's. It is common place that the military tutelage regime which constitutes the peculiarity of Turkish political life has by no means arisen recently.

In Western countries, which are the classical terrain of capitalist development, the political sphere has taken shape and served as a means to develop capitalist private property and civil society as an expression of it. But in Turkey the traditional bourgeois political sphere has generally been hostile to civil society and supported only a kind of capitalist process of development which is under state protection. This mode and structuring of politics which is an extension of the tradition of despotic state tradition has increasingly become hindrance to changing needs of Turkish capitalism and the new process underway.

The need to overcome this hindrance is the real motive behind the fact that certain sections of the bourgeoisie in Turkey has begun to defend civil politics, which is very late in comparison to the Western countries. On the same historical ground, let alone the fact that Turkish capitalism has been unable to create a Social-Democratic Party, it has not even given chance for a liberal tendency to develop in the political sphere.

In fact it is only after structural economic change carried out under extra-ordinary regimes in the wake of 1980 that the bourgeois circles took up and promoted these issues in the form of debates. It is quite opportune here to remind our analyses on this aspect of the process going on in Turkey. (For an extensive reading see E.Çağlı, *Bonapartizmden Faşizme* [From Bonapartism to Fascism])

When we look into the period preceding the 12 September military-fascist coup we see that the big bourgeoisie with its various elements in manufacturing, commerce, banking etc. was now more strengthened and fully established in a synthesis of finance-capital. 1980 is a crucial turning point which sets the scene for finance-capital to force all realms of life under its hegemony through its octopus-

like tentacles and the long-craved leap forward towards foreign markets.

At this turning point big capital made its preparations for a fully-fledged blow to overcome the hindrances in its way to accomplish a huge capitalist breakthrough inside and go outside at full speed to foreign markets. From the standpoint of finance-capital which has now fully grown and become hegemonic it became inevitable to overcome the bottleneck created by the mode of accumulation based on domestic market and carry out structural changes. Because, coupled with the tendency of recession in world capitalism at the time, the structural crisis of Turkish capitalism created by its long-time autarchic mode of operation now became mature and the heap of problems reached to great dimensions as the solution had been delayed.

Because of the severe tension between its quest for a breakthrough and the existing situation, big capital went into offensive in all fronts, economic, political, etc. And while it started its move of structural change by the January 24 Decisions to remove the hindrances on its way, on the other hand it aimed to stop the rise of the working class movement and end the revolutionary situation that threatened the bourgeois order through the military regime of 12 September. The 12 September fascism was a serious blow hard to recover from, resulting in the working class being atomized, intimidated and made deeply fearful of organised struggle.

The period after 12 September 1980

The role of the military in the political life of Turkey, which had already been a major one, has become more intense and consolidated with the 12 September regime. With the blows inflicted by the military bureaucracy to the parliamentary regime and the new legislation brought by it (the 1982 constitution being the foremost which is still in effect) they aimed to construct such a military dictatorship that would guarantee the role of the military in political life as if almost eternally. This situation has resulted in a strengthened position of the military chiefs in politics that has been going on for so many years despite the fact that by 1983 elections the military junta seemingly abandoned power leaving it to parliament.

Although the bloody military dictatorship of September 12 - which was portrayed as a mild military regime in the West - has begun to dissolve with time, its legacy continues today. For example, the code of laws installed by the military junta is still basically in force, although some amendments to the constitution have been made recently.

Another important fact besides all these is that the military-despotic aspect of the Turkish state has been strengthened more and more during the period of the national liberation struggle of the Kurdish people in the Turkish part of Kurdistan.

During this war, waged by the Turkish army against Kurdish national resistance, thirty thousand Kurds have been killed, ten thousand have been put in jail, thousands have been tortured, hundreds of thousands of Kurdish peasants have been forcibly evicted from their homelands and their villages have been burned. Forced to migrate to the big cities, these people have been condemned to unemployment and hunger.

In the aftermath of the 1983 parliamentary elections when neo-liberal winds were blown throughout the world Özal was at the steering wheel of economy. He was now the prime-minister and had been the architect of the January 24 Decisions. And the rules of the economy that had been in the list of untouchables for long were changed according to the demands of TÜSİAD. For instance nationalist and protective measures such as the law that protects the Turkish currency was abolished and the regime of foreign trade was liberalised. Under Özal, at the expense of decomposing society, Turkish capitalism underwent a structural change (going international, a deeper integration into imperialist system) in the interests of finance-capital.

Turkey's peculiarities are no secret. Military chiefs have always been at the centre of politics which is unprecedented in European countries. This military bureaucracy has always regarded bourgeois civil attempts to lessen its role in politics as a domestic threat to the regime and has taken a stand against such attempts. When we consider the period since 1980 it is in a sense indeed difficult to pinpoint when the extraordinary mode of rule of the bourgeoisie ends and when the ordinary bourgeois parliamentary regime begins in Turkey, which is different from European countries.

Hence after 1983 we had a kind of bourgeois rule with a parliamentary mechanism on the one hand and those institutions and practices established by the extraordinary regime on the other hand, which on the whole was a freak of nature, up until the general elections of 2002. In other words the Turkish parliamentary system, which already had a crippled democratic content in comparison to the Western European examples, was much more crippled due to the impact of the 12 September regime up until the elections on 3 November 2002. And broad popular masses taught a lesson to those political parties whom they see as rep-

representatives of the statist, oppressing and pro-status quo forces by bringing AKP to power.

While these times seem to have gone it must not be forgotten that the big bourgeoisie and its organisations like TUSIAD were the main supporters of the fascist dictatorship headed by the military junta and subsequently the Bonapartist regime under Ozal. These forces watched in happiness and submission the moves carried out by the extraordinary regimes to open up the economy and suppress the revolutionary movement and the workers' movement.

There are important issues not to be overlooked when we discuss the 12 September regime. The end of fascism in Turkey does not resemble the processes in Spain, Greece, Portugal or some Latin American countries. There was a blow coming from below in these countries when the fascist dictatorships got weakened, which was not the case in Turkey. Likewise, there were other things that were lacked in Turkey which happened in those countries, such as a mass movement of toilers, revolutionary uprisings or feverish mobilisation of political forces to divert such a kind of rise from the road of revolution and revive bourgeois democracy.

In cases where masses revolted to overthrow the fascist military dictatorship, the putschist generals were brought to the court with the force of the wave of revolt. But the fascist putschists in Turkey have shifted to their comfortable resort places with swollen wallets obtained thanks to state posts.

Speaking of the past, there is another important fact not to be forgotten. While the fascist regime was in the process of being liquidated the bourgeois order in Turkey began to be rocked by the national liberation movement of the oppressed Kurdish nation. Coward and cruel Turkish bourgeoisie did not speak of democracy and speak up for a long time with the hope that its holy army would suppress this movement. However the surfacing of Kurdish question, which the Turkish state had refrained to face thanks to the bloody policy of suppression for many years, changed all given political balances and paradigms, and worked as a historical-social catalyst.

Complaints of big capital organisations about the military tutelage regime that marked the political history of the country have begun to surface only after this regime began to act as a hindrance for their interests. The fact that voices have started to be heard from among the bourgeoisie arguing for a European model of bourgeois democracy in Turkey is an expression of this fact. There is also a tendency of political liberalism flourishing in this terrain with certain writers and

publications taking the lead.

There is no doubt that when groups of big capital speak of democratisation what they mean is creation of a political atmosphere that would save them from autarchy and enable them to open up towards outside world. And the extent to which they are interested in certain grave problems that have turned into gangrene is determined by that. This kind of class interests lie behind the “democratisation” drive pursued by the TUSİAD bourgeoisie, which is completely geared to the EU and extremely inconsistent.

The kind of wider democracy that could only be achieved through the struggle of the working class, revolutionaries, Kurdish people is no doubt ruled out of the content of the “democratisation” package of the big bourgeoisie! On the contrary, the attitude of the big capital circles on the democratic openings is extremely shifty and erratic due to the class worries for a possible rise of mass struggles for these demands. In any case it is completely misplaced to expect an extensive and consistent attitude from a pure big capital organisation like TUSİAD.

TÜSİAD still has a shifty attitude and frequently changes discourse according to the situation of the anti-system struggle and the conjunctural priorities of the infighting going on within the bourgeoisie. Liberal left columnists, on the other hand, expect a determined and consistent attitude from TÜSİAD over democratic reforms. Yet nowhere on earth organisations of big capital have such an attitude over these kinds of issues. They need democracy only as long as, and in so far as, it guarantees and increases their profits. It cannot be overlooked, however, that the positions of liberal left writers who have been pursuing a persistent bourgeois democratic agenda and the positions of the organisations of big capital over “democratic solution” do not completely coincide.

For left liberals the struggle for political democracy that would result in a bourgeois parliamentary system in Turkey in the model of the West is a very important matter of principle. For big capital, however, implementation of certain “democratisation” packages can become urgent only depending on time and circumstances (mostly with pressure from abroad!). But there is a negative side to be emphasized in left liberals’ attitude as well.

Left liberals distort the consciousness of working masses by preaching overconfidence to the demands of “democratisation” on the part of the organisations of big capital like TUSİAD. To spread the illusion that democracy could be brought by big capital obscures the fact that workers and the Turkish and Kurdish poor need to fight to achieve a wider democracy. Big capital, on the other hand, acting

on its own class interests by its nature, makes its way without paying so much attention to what left liberals say.

Problems such as the liquidation of the military tutelage regime and democratisation of Turkish political landscape have become items on the agenda of big capital in connection with its drive for going international and economic exigencies. Likewise, to find a solution to the Kurdish question and Cyprus question has become the agenda of the big capital due to the factors like Turkey's drive to join the EU or undertake new missions in the Middle East in collaboration with the USA.

But successive bourgeois coalition governments before the general elections of 2002 did not solve these problems. Actually they turned these problems into deadlocks in many respects. And these problems, aggravated as they are, again came out as problems on the table to be solved by AKP which came to power single-handedly after 2002 elections with promises to bring a solution. The first and second terms of AKP governments seem to constitute a new period in which these problems have started to be solved.

However, as we explained above, the relationship between economy and politics in Turkey has peculiar aspects in comparison to the Western countries. As explained by the course of historical development a military tutelage system based on the military and civil bureaucracy has taken shape in this land and continued its influence. As a consequence of this situation the military-guided bourgeois political landscape in Turkey, unlike the Western capitalist countries, has created peculiar redlines and points of resistance incompatible with the exigencies of the economy.

Because of the despotic-statist tradition Turkey's prevailing official history is quite different in comparison to the western countries. There are serious differences between official discourse and facts in this country in terms of even naming and analysing things in bourgeois political arena. For instance, if you look at the official discourse, he who defends Kemalist secularism is regarded as modern, democrat even revolutionary. Yet, this line which is represented for many years by the military-civil bureaucracy and the state party, i.e. the CHP, in politics, is pro-status quo and politically reactionary.

And those "out-of-centre" sections who have been constantly tried to be kept away from political life by the Kemalist bureaucracy who branded them "reactionary" for many years, created a political current and forces that want an end to the military tutelage regime and defend liberalism to that extent. Moreover, those political parties, the main example being the Democratic Party (DP) of the

1950's and AKP the most recent one, which contain this feature have received overwhelming majority's vote and formed bourgeois governments.

It is from this perspective that we need to look at today's realities. True, military-civil bureaucracy is pro-status quo and reactionary. And the AKP exhibits a liberal political quality with its apparently populist aspects vis-à-vis Kemalist state-worshipping and opposition to traditional statist status quo. With these qualities AKP has overwhelmingly outflanked the defunct statist parties like CHP which are exposed in political arena. And on the basis of the same qualities it managed to present itself as liberal-democrat and on the side of poor popular masses. It goes without saying that all these appearances are but illusions.

Here is the fact of the matter: had there not been a peculiar question as military tutelage regime in Turkey the lack of bourgeois democratic notions and political liberalism on the part of the AKP and political circles that rely on it would easily be revealed. AKP is not the representative or protector of the working masses but a bourgeois party proper. And a genuine party of big capital voicing the interests of nascent groups of capital thrived on the basis of a wild exploitation of the working class.

These nascent groups of big capital and their political spokesmen or representatives form those bourgeois forces craving for imperialist expansionism in the region along with the accompanying theses of neo-Ottomanism now popular. On the other hand these imperial ambitions cannot simply be regarded as an empty reflection of nostalgia. Despite the intense infighting going on within the ruling class, the economic driving forces behind this ambition for expansion have made the AKP government proceed a long way towards integration into the world economy. No matter what adverse reactions AKP receive on the part of would-be secularist groups of big capital and those who support military tutelage regime, it is the AKP government that eventually managed to represent a bigger scale Turkish capitalism overall.

The issue of "strategic partnership" which has been recently voiced also by the US ruling circles has got a real substance within the framework of the role Turkey is considered to play. AKP presents and upholds this situation as a demonstration of its success. This attitude is an indication of Turkey's ambition to consolidate its sub-imperialist position.

AKP and its milieu are now proud of the process of Turkey's transformation into a sub-imperialist power ceasing to be a peripheral country. As a matter of fact this process has actually begun in Özal period. The new war of division stretch-

ing out from Balkans to the Middle East and Turkic republics that began with the collapse of the Soviet Union coincided with the now sub-imperialist Turkey's plans for expansion. And the ideological disguise of the new bourgeois sections' move for expansion over these regions has become neo-Ottomanism.

Turkey which was once an underdeveloped capitalist country became one of the medium-level developed capitalist countries as a result of feverish capitalist development after 1960. And after 1980 there was a process of feverish structural change in the direction of opening up towards outside world under extraordinary bourgeois regimes which created a nearly trouble-free environment for capital by repressing the working class and toiling masses. In consequence Turkey climbed upwards among medium-level capitalist countries and became a sub-imperialist country.

It is crucial to understand correctly the change the capitalist countries such as Turkey have passed through within the global workings of capitalism. Although dependent on imperialist powers Turkey has now become a sub-imperialist country where capitalism has developed with leaps and bounds. As a consequence of this process of change the bourgeoisie in Turkey has been experiencing pains of a skin change. The infighting within the bourgeois power bloc that has been going on for long is a reflection of this. Today the Turkish bourgeoisie is basically divided into two in terms of perceiving the outstanding problems in Turkish and world politics and thus developing corresponding political attitudes.

The general rule is undoubtedly is that economic base and economic needs are in the final analysis decisive. However to break the traditional political crust in Turkey and establish a new political landscape compatible with the global economy comes about in an extremely belated, troubled and conflicted way. We can summarise the developments along this way in a few points as conclusion.

First, although these economic motives put a strong stamp over the last period of Turkey the tension in the political sphere is still going on. Although the party that stands for the military tutelage regime is objectively losing ground, the political infighting between them and the liberal forces that stand for demilitarisation has not been decisively concluded yet.

Second, given Turkey's realities, it is not a bad but a good thing that there are political forces standing for bourgeois democracy such as left liberals etc. in the political arena, although they do not ultimately go beyond the bourgeois frame.

Third, it is a positive step in this land to demand a normalisation, in a bour-

geois sense, of the political landscape which has been for many years under direct command or indirect shadow of military tutelage regime. But that left liberals present it in an exaggerated way by, for instance, speaking of “civil revolution”, “democracy revolution” etc., should not be tolerated.

Forth, while such a change is a positive thing, given the realities of Turkey, it should not be forgotten that it is extremely belated. In a world where capitalism is rocked by crises and thus even the framework of traditional bourgeois democracies is narrowed, it is extremely dangerous to create an illusion of “bourgeois democracy” to work smoothly.

Fifth, and last, the “democratisation” brought forward onto the agenda of Turkey and demanded from the government of AKP takes its motivation, including the position of left liberals, largely from big capital’s need for going global. Yet what is needed today is a kind of struggle for democracy which takes its *raison d’être*, its legitimacy and strength from the revolutionary struggle of the working class, toiling masses and Kurdish poor... Moreover, as we try to emphasize in every occasion, regardless of the kind or content, only those gains achieved and protected through organised struggle can be lasting!