

Turkey: PKK offers its services to Finance Minister Dervis and the military

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In a series of statements, leading members of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) have not only expressed support for the right-wing, neo-liberal policies of Turkish Finance Minister Kemal Dervis and the employers' federation Tüsiad, but also indicated their readiness to work with the generals of the Turkish army.

After his kidnapping two-and-half years ago, followed by a demeaning show trial that culminated in a death sentence, PKK leader Abdullah “Apo” Öcalan issued a call for the PKK to renounce its guerrilla war against the Turkish state. As a result the PKK withdrew most of its fighters from Turkey and at its seventh party congress, held at the beginning of last year, struck from its programme all calls for armed struggle and the independence of Kurdistan.

It proclaimed that in the future the liberation of the Kurds from oppression and discrimination was to be achieved exclusively through “democratic political” means and the securing of cultural rights in a “democratic republic” of Turkey. This capitulation was, in fact, the logical and inevitable outcome of the organisation's bourgeois nationalist perspective.

The PKK has now reacted to the growth of social discontent and the sharpening of the economic and political crisis of the Turkish state by offering its services to bolster the Turkish state even as the state continues to persecute, torture and murder PKK members.

At the end of February, immediately after the crash of the Turkish stock market and collapse of the national currency, Osman Öcalan, the brother of “Apo” and a party leader in his own right, suggested that in the interests of Turkish and international capital, instead of wiping out the PKK, the state should make a deal with the organisation. Osman Öcalan declared, “Everyone

knows that capital will not come to an environment in which there is no peace. Capitalist circles see the situation here as dangerous and are pulling out for that reason. Foreign capital has fled, and domestic capital is seeking to flee as well. In other words, capital has not found Turkey's situation to be conducive to business confidence.”

Osman Öcalan warned against the dangers of a military putsch like that carried out in 1997 against the Islamist Prime Minister Erbakan or a government led by the neo-fascist MHP (Nationalist Movement Party, also known as the “Grey Wolves”).

The Turkish government eventually reacted to the crisis, responding to pressure from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank by naming the former World Bank technocrat Kemal Dervis to the post of finance minister. The Turkish and international media have used the broad and justified popular anger against the corruption and high-handedness of the government to portray Dervis as the saviour of the country.

There have been massive protests by workers, peasants and small businessmen against factory closures, privatisations and cuts in wages and social benefits. The badly discredited government has consequently hesitated to follow the demands of the international banks. This is the reason why not only the European Union but also, for example, the employers' federation Tüsiad are demanding, in the name of “democratisation”, the inclusion of Kurdish bourgeois forces to provide the appearance of a broader basis of support and greater legitimacy for the state's plans to escalate its attacks on the working population.

PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan enthusiastically supported Tüsiad, declaring, “The bourgeoisie in Turkey is in the vanguard of democracy; it has understood its importance. As opposed to this, the

unions utterly fail to understand. I am calling on them to raise their democratic demands. They are not telling the Turkish people the truth concerning the reasons for the crisis. Democratic alliance is important. What is fundamental is alliance with Turkey's democratic forces. Capital circles in Turkey have comprehended this, but the unions and political parties must also come to the point of democratic unity” (*Kurdish Observer*, May 5).

In fact, the main aim of the so-called process of “democratisation” is to break up traditional forms of rule in Turkey. According to Dervis, Tüsiad and the international banks, the campaign against corruption and nepotism in the economy excludes any form of democratic control by working people over economic affairs. On the contrary, the sole measure of the effectiveness of the process of “democratisation” is to be increased profits and enhanced international competitiveness.

This is why right-wing Turkish newspapers such as *Hürriyet* complain about “populist politicians”, and business experts compare the current situation in Turkey with that of former Stalinist countries, prophesying decades of “painful adaptation”. In this respect, so-called “democratisation” is hardly compatible with democratic measures. Increasingly, behind the scenes, the Turkish military is pulling the strings and controlling the diverse “operations” against corruption, which have already led to the resignation of Energy Minister Cumhuriyet Ersümer.

At the beginning of May, Duran Kalkan, another leading member of the PKK, gave an interview to the daily paper *Özgür Politika*, which has close links to the PKK. He greeted the appointment of Dervis and called for collaboration with both Dervis and the Turkish military: “There are views, indications that the military is renewing itself in the framework of developments. These are being called ‘efforts to modernise’. It is being said that it [the army] is doing the same politically...

“Kemal Dervis said of the army that it ‘loved Turkey’. The officers are trained on the principle of assuming Turkey's interests as first priority.... They are watching the situation in Turkey and following Turkey's interests. If they see that these interests have made a democratic initiative mandatory and that it will not be possible for different trends to save Turkey from

crisis and collapse, they will be open to democratic developments.”

The PKK is of the opinion that the military is too weak and discredited to take power directly. It offers its own services to bolster the state—as ever in the name of democracy. To this end Osman Öcalan urges that a delegation of the Turkish army come to visit the PKK in northern Iraq. The web site of the pro-PKK *Kurdish Observer* (May 7) bluntly states: “Ocalan said that the PKK was ready to fulfil what was asked of it in Turkey's interests, and went on to say the following: ‘We are ready to debate whatever they ask of us. Let's debate those things you find dangerous and develop paths of solution. We are calling upon you to send a delegation for this purpose.’”



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