

Turkey's petty-bourgeois left lines up behind bourgeois pro-NATO opposition

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Following the decision of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to hold parliamentary and presidential snap elections on June 24, the Turkish pseudo-left parties and organisations are lining up behind the pro-NATO and pro-EU bourgeois opposition parties. While they are divided amongst themselves on the question of Kurdish nationalism, they are all in agreement on the rejection of an independent perspective for the working class—independent of all the discredited bourgeois camps.

Erdogan decided to call the election 17 months ahead of the scheduled date under the pressure of intensifying class tensions, an escalating fiscal and economic crisis, the ongoing war in Syria and US war preparations against Iran.

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has formed an electoral alliance with the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and the Grand Unity Party (BBP)—the “People's Alliance”. The main bourgeois opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), is heading the “Nation Alliance” that also includes the newly formed Good Party (İYİ Parti—a Turkish nationalist party that split from the MHP) and the Felicity Party (SP—a smaller Islamist party, from which the AKP split in 2001).

Such electoral alliances between political parties, which have been legalised by a new electoral law, allow smaller parties, who join an alliance, to bypass the prohibitive 10 percent electoral threshold.

The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) has not been allowed into the “Nation Alliance” due to opposition by Turkish nationalists. It is participating in the election with its own slate. While not having formed its own alliance, it has included leading members of smaller Kurdish nationalist parties and of a significant part of the Turkish pseudo-left in its slate.

In the presidential election, the three main parties of the “Nation Alliance”—CHP, İYİ Party and SP—are running separate candidates against Erdogan. The HDP and the Homeland Party (a former Maoist, Turkish nationalist party) are also participating with their own candidates.

On Sunday, May 13, the United June Movement (Birle?ik Haziran Hareketi, BHH), Turkey's largest pseudo-left alliance, named after the May-June 2013 anti-government Gezi Park protests, announced its position in the coming election,

summing it up in the slogan “No to the AKP-MHP alliance”.

The meeting was attended by two deputies from the CHP, by the chairperson of the Confederation of Public Employees Trade Unions (KESK) and by several other trade unionists. Fatih Yaldi, a leading figure of the BHH, announced that his movement will conduct “an active struggle to weaken the AKP-MHP block.”

The BHH pledged to organize “a NO campaign against the one-man regime” of Erdogan and promised to “protect the ballot boxes”. It called on “all forces that stand for freedom, equality and brotherhood, and the millions, who took the road for justice [a reference to the CHP's “Justice March” in June-July 2017] to vote for the protection of the future of our country”.

This was a tacit call to vote for the CHP's “Nation Alliance”. The BHH, however, could not spell out the name of the party it is supporting; and there are good reasons for this.

First, the BHH is a pseudo-left alliance comprised of a broad array of political parties, trade unions, groups and individuals with a former or actual Stalinist, guerrillaist or Pabloite background, which have diverse positions on Kurdish nationalism. Thus, it was impossible for the leadership of the BHH to make an open choice between the CHP and the HDP, which would have led to an open split in its ranks. In the ongoing Syrian war, the CHP and the HDP find themselves on opposite sides. While the CHP supports the massive military and police operations of the Turkish army against the Kurdish nationalists in Syria and Turkey, the HDP opposes them.

The BHH leadership is also well aware of the fact that both main bourgeois opposition parties, the CHP and the HDP, which it tries to present as a “left-wing” alternative to Erdogan and his AKP, are deeply hated by workers and youth because of their political support for the imperialist war drive in the Middle East and because they have both cooperated with the AKP in its attacks on the working class.

The leading force of the BHH, the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ODP), has announced its pro-CHP attitude in the coming election in a similar manner. The ODP was founded by several guerrillaist and ex-Stalinist organisations with the full participation of the Turkish Pabloites in 1996.

In an interview with his party's daily *Birgün* on May 10,

leading ODP member Alper Tas justified his support for the traditional party of the Turkish bourgeoisie by saying: “This law [the new electoral law] has made the alliance almost an obligation... We had to form an arithmetical alliance even with those we do not trust.” According to Tas, “When the AKP and Erdogan are gone, there will be, of course, no revolution in Turkey. But the country would be freed from the most important source of instability and unrest. And this is not something insignificant.”

The representative of the ODP also claimed that “in the new parliament there will be deputies from the BHH and close to it. Together with them, we would continue our struggle.” There is no doubt that he is referring to deputies running on the slate of the “Nation Alliance”.

Another leading force among the Turkish pseudo-left, the Labor Party (EMEP) is supporting the HDP under the same slogan used by the BHH to support the CHP-led alliance: “Against the one-man, one party regime.”

Scores of smaller Stalinist, ex-Stalinist, Maoist, guerrillaist and Pabloite organisations are orbiting around the ODP and the EMEP, or are supporting the CHP or the Kurdish bourgeois nationalists on their own, as they did in previous elections.

In order to adapt their fake “revolutionary” or “socialist” pretensions to the pro-imperialist, pro-war and reactionary character of the CHP and HDP, these smaller pseudo-left organisations are now politically juggling six things at the same time. Their calls vary between supporting the HDP in both the parliamentary and the presidential election, a boycott of the second round and a call for a total boycott of the presidential election.

The anti-working class pro-imperialist character of these pseudo-left organisations will be further manifested when the presidential election comes to the second round. There is little doubt that almost all of them will vote for the candidate of the “Nation Alliance” against Erdogan. A Pabloite group confessed: “In the second round, however, we will vote for the total force of the anti-autocrats”—i.e. either for the CHP or the İyi Party candidate – who will “transform it into a referendum on Erdogan and the one-man regime”.

Before switching behind one of the two main bourgeois alliances against Erdogan, the pseudo-left parties and organisations had made hypocritical calls to “the forces of labour, peace and democracy” to form a “democratic alliance” to run a “common candidate against the one-man regime”. At its 9th Congress, held on March 10 and 11, the ODP decided to “take responsibility for nominating a common candidate of progressive, left-wing, socialist and revolutionary forces”, in a prelude to open cooperation with the CHP.

EMEP, for its part, issued a statement on April 25 calling “all labour, peace and democracy forces,” first of all the BHH, HDP and the Community Centers (Halk Evleri), to form a “democratic alliance to run a common candidate against the one-man regime.”

As expected, this did not happen. The Turkish pseudo-left remained divided along nationalist lines. In the second round of the presidential elections they will line up behind the most powerful candidate of the Turkish ruling class, with the HDP bargaining with either Erdogan or his rival over the conditions of its potential support.

The upcoming June 24 elections, the first ones since the transformation of Turkey from a parliamentary into a presidential regime, have once again exposed the pro-imperialist and anti-working class role of the pseudo-left.

In its attempt to disorient the growing anger of workers and youth over the escalation of militarism and social counter-revolution, the pseudo-left has in fact facilitated the drive to war and dictatorship. Its opposition to Erdogan and the AKP through manipulating democratic and anti-war sentiments of workers and youth behind parties supporting NATO and the EU is, in its essence, part of a regime change operation of US imperialism and its European allies.

The bourgeois opponents of Erdogan cannot offer any solution to the deepening economic and political crisis of Turkish capitalism other than to escalate militarism, implement brutal austerity policies and suppress the working class opposition by using and further strengthening the same police-state apparatus created by Erdogan’s AKP for their own interests.

It is not the factions of the ruling class, supported by the petty-bourgeois opponents of Erdogan, but the Turkish working class, in close cooperation with Middle Eastern, American and European workers, that will consistently fight against the drive toward imperialist war and its devastating economic and social consequences, including the authoritarian forms of rule prevailing in Turkey.

The Turkish working class can stop this drive to disaster only through the foundation of its independent political leadership, the Socialist Equality Party, based on the internationalist, revolutionary socialist perspective and program developed by the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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