

Workers' Party of Turkey backs Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu in presidential election

Hakan Özal**13 March 2023**

Erkan Ba?, chairman and deputy of the Workers' Party of Turkey (T?P) was one of the first politicians to congratulate Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu after the Nation Alliance chose him as its presidential candidate for the May 14 elections.

On Tuesday, when TV100 asked him, "Would you support Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the presidential candidate of the Nation Alliance," Ba? replied: "Let's defeat him in the first round."

This means the T?P will support Kılıçdaroğlu in the presidential election against Recep Tayyip Erdo?an and advise its own alliance members, led by the Kurdish-nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), to do the same. The HDP's over 6 million voters could well swing in the election results.

The T?P's assembly, which convened in the earthquake-hit Hatay province over the weekend, decided that "the Central Executive Committee is authorized to make a decision on supporting Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's candidacy in consultation with the democratic public opinion, especially with the allied organizations in the Labour and Freedom Alliance."

This confirms the *World Socialist Web Site's* (WSWS) analysis of the Labour and Freedom Alliance (EÖ?), as "a so-called 'left' political extension of the Nation Alliance of bourgeois opposition parties led by the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP)."

The WSWS explained that EÖ?'s function was "to drive the growing anger and opposition of workers and youth to both President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an and the 'Nation Alliance' into the channels of the capitalist establishment and thus suppress it. This means preventing the development of an independent revolutionary movement of the working class, the key to genuine change."

In Turkey, as all over the world, the masses of workers

and youth are looking for a way forward and are shifting to the left amid rising living costs largely due to the official response to the COVID-19 pandemic and NATO's war against Russia. This has been accelerated by the colossal earthquake disaster that caused tens of thousands of preventable deaths. As an expression of this political shift, the T?P has seen rapid growth in recent months.

However, it does not represent a way forward but functions as a dam in front of the growing search for a genuine socialist alternative among the masses. In fact, the T?P and the Labour and Freedom Alliance, let alone the Nation Alliance, have no viable solutions to the fundamental problems facing the working class and the oppressed masses.

The T?P, like the Erdo?an government and the bourgeois opposition, ignores the pandemic and the public health catastrophe it has caused, causing over 300,000 deaths in Turkey alone. The T?P, which claims to defend "peace program" everywhere, is silent about the pro-NATO character of the HDP or the Nation Alliance. While pointing to the growing social inequality under Erdo?an's Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002, it also hides the fact that the CHP-led Nation Alliance also represents finance capital and seeks to massively enrich it.

"We will fulfill our responsibility to rid the country of the palace [i.e., Erdo?an] regime, but we also need to see our interlocutors," Ba? said in the same interview, adding: "First we need liberation, then we need re-establishment."

The T?P, which advances the bankrupt "lesser evil" policy that dominates the pseudo-left internationally, argues that the task of getting rid of the right-wing Erdo?an government falls not to the working class, but to the Nation Alliance, which represents another right-wing faction of the same ruling class. This alliance,

whatever its rhetoric, seeks to manipulate broad popular opposition to the Erdo?an government. It is favored by the Biden administration in Washington, as well as other NATO powers.

Asked for his opinion of the slogan “one vote for T?P [in the parliamentary elections] and one vote for K?l?çdaro?lu [in the presidential election],” Ba? replied: “This shows that some of our line is understood.” He continued that after the Nation Alliance comes to power, the T?P will assume the main opposition role and for this, citizens should vote for the T?P.

Ba? claimed that his party would support the new government’s “decisions for the benefit of the citizens,” but that it would uncompromisingly oppose the that government’s “neoliberal policies, privatization of education and health care.”

Thus the T?P is fully aware that if the Nation Alliance wins the elections, it would continue the essential policies of Erdo?an. Ali Babacan, the leader of DEVA party, one of the members of the alliance, served as foreign and economy minister in the AKP governments from 2002 to 2015. Babacan, who enjoys the trust of financial elites in Washington, London and Frankfurt, is rumored to be the economy minister of a potential new government.

Another member of the alliance, Ahmet Davuto?lu, leader of the Future Party, was Erdogan’s foreign minister from 2009 to 2014 and then his prime minister from 2014 to 2016. Davutoglu was a leading architect of Ankara’s dirty role in NATO’s regime change war in Syria, mobilizing Islamist jihadists as their proxies.

The fact that Ba? is demanding votes for a right-wing bourgeois alliance, whose pro-imperialist and anti-working class character is evident to him and to others, means that his party is consciously complicit in the crimes that a potential new government will commit.

Contrary to the claims of the T?P and other pseudo-left parties, masses of workers and youth do not have to choose between the factions of the bourgeoisie. This bankrupt middle-class nationalist perspective only serves to politically disarm and disorient workers everywhere.

From Syriza in Greece to Podemos in Spain and the Left Party in Germany, the WWSWS has comprehensively analyzed the destructive political role and the theoretical and historical roots of the pseudo-left internationally. In 2015, in his Foreword to *The Frankfurt School, Postmodernism and the Politics of the Pseudo-Left: A Marxist Critique*, David North, Chairman of the WWSWS

International Editorial Board, described this political tendency internationally as follows:

The pseudo-left denotes political parties, organizations and theoretical/ideological tendencies, which utilize populist slogans and democratic phrases to promote the socioeconomic interests of privileged and affluent strata of the middle class. Examples of such parties and tendencies include Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, Die Linke in Germany, and numerous offshoots of ex-Trotskyist (i.e., Pabloite) and state capitalist organizations such as the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) in France, the NSSP in Sri Lanka and the International Socialist Organization in the United States.

Founded in 2017 following a split in the Stalinist Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) in 2014, the T?P sought to orient and adapt more openly to the bourgeoisie and imperialism under the guise of being “with the masses.” Its party leaders were elected as deputies from the HDP, which is represented in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. However, the T?P’s main goal has been to serve as a bridge between the Turkish bourgeois-nationalist parties led by the CHP and the Kurdish bourgeois-nationalist HDP.

The T?P uses left-populist rhetoric to keep the social and democratic aspirations of the masses and their growing opposition to the capitalist order within parliamentary boundaries. The dirty record of its pseudo-left allies internationally, indicates that a similar political trap is being set in Turkey.

Based on the lessons of history, the Socialist Equality Group in Turkey calls on workers and youth to refuse to be forced to choose between bourgeois right-wing political factions in the service of imperialism and to build a genuine socialist-internationalist alternative, i.e., the Socialist Equality Party as the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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