

Statement of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu on the elections in Turkey

# No to war! Reject the pro-imperialist alliances of the Turkish ruling class! Build the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi!

For a global mass movement of workers and youth against war! For the United Socialist States of the Middle East and Europe!

Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu  
9 May 2023

The May 14 presidential and parliamentary elections are being held against the backdrop of the danger of a nuclear world war, intensified by NATO's escalating war against Russia in Ukraine and the growing upsurge of the working class internationally. The outcome of the elections in Turkey, which is a bridge between Europe and Asia and controls the straits leading to the Black Sea, is of international importance.

The NATO alliance, of which Turkey is a member, threatens humanity with annihilation in a nuclear Third World War by escalating the war against Russia in Ukraine and accelerating the preparations for war against China. As the world's governments pour trillions of dollars into militarism and the financial markets, the living standards and purchasing power of the masses are falling at an unprecedented rate, and resistance is growing within the working class internationally.

The Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (Socialist Equality Group, SEG), the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), opposes imperialism and the capitalist political establishment, which promises nothing but social disaster. The fight against imperialist war, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of living and social inequality and authoritarian forms of rule requires the international revolutionary mobilization of the working class against capitalism on the basis of a socialist program and the taking of power.

The SEG's perspective is based on the lessons of history. Turkey is being drawn into the maelstrom created by the global escalation of imperialist war. The NATO war in Ukraine, a few hundred kilometers to the north of Turkey, will have far-reaching effects on the political situation in Turkey.

The first global conflict of the 20th century erupted in the Balkans, as different states fought over the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 were followed by World War I, triggered by the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The geopolitical conflicts that shattered the Ottoman Empire and led to the world war from which the modern Turkish Republic emerged are returning today in even more explosive form.

This first global carnage was brought to an end by the October Revolution of 1917, led by the Bolshevik Party under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky. It is the revolutionary intervention of the international working class that can prevent the global contradictions of capitalism—which twice in the 20th century plunged humanity into

world war—from leading to a Third World War.

The earthquake disaster in Turkey and Syria on February 6, which made millions of people homeless and caused tens of thousands of deaths, has tragically demonstrated that the capitalist nation-state system is an obstacle to a planned and rational response to urgent social issues on an international scale. The failure of the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an and the entire political establishment to prepare for the expected earthquake is due to the fact that politics is determined on the basis of profit and wealth accumulation. While major natural events such as earthquakes do not recognize artificial national borders, the policies of capitalist governments are dominated by purely national concerns.

The same objective basis underlies the disastrous “profits before lives” response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic that killed more than 20 million people continues to cause mass infection, debilitation and death, the world's population is also threatened by climate change and new pandemics.

## Capitalist alliances and the SEG's position

The SEG explains that there is no progressive alternative representing the working class in the presidential and parliamentary elections, a very sharp expression of the current political crisis, and does not give support to any candidate. None of the parties contesting this election advance, even in the most limited form, the interests of the working class.

As a young political tendency, the SEG is not yet able to directly run its own candidates. Drawing upon the immense historical experience of the international Trotskyist movement and its struggle to establish the political independence of the working class from bourgeois and middle class parties, it is intervening in these elections to explain the political issues to the most conscious sections of the working class and youth—presenting an international socialist program and explaining what they should do, not only on election day, but after.

The rival factions of the ruling class are contesting these elections in two main alliances: The People Alliance, led by Erdo?an's Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the fascist Nationalist Movement Party

(MHP); and the Nation Alliance, led by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Good Party, a split-off from the MHP. The Nation Alliance also includes the Islamist Felicity Party from which the AKP emerged, the Future Party of former AKP prime minister and foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and the DEVA party of former AKP economy minister Ali Babacan.

Opinion polls, most of which show Kılıçdaroğlu in the lead, suggest that the presidential election could go to a second round. Two other candidates with less than 10 percent of the vote are also running. Muharrem Nince, the CHP's candidate in the 2018 presidential election, is running for the presidency to criticize the presence of Davutoğlu and Babacan in the Nation Alliance. The Ata Alliance candidate, led by the Victory Party, is trying to develop a far-right movement based on a xenophobic program.

Erdoğan is running for a third term in violation of the constitution. Neither his ruling bloc nor the bourgeois opposition alliances offer a way forward for the working class, who make up the majority of the population in Turkey. What these reactionary bourgeois alliances have in common is their loyalty to imperialism and their hostility towards the workers. Their greatest fear is the mass mobilization of the working class, which faces a massive economic and social crisis and the danger of a further escalation of NATO's war against Russia.

Several electoral alliances have formed with the support of pseudo-left groups to line up behind Kılıçdaroğlu and contain the anger of the masses. The first is the Labour and Freedom Alliance of the Kurdish nationalist People's Democratic Party (HDP) and its ally, the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP). The HDP is running its campaign under the name of the Green Left Party (YSB) due to the Erdoğan government's reactionary threat to shut down the HDP.

The Stalinist Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) and the Left Party (former Freedom and Solidarity Party, ÖDP) have also formed the Socialist Union of Forces (SGB) alliance, which follow the same right-wing policy. Like the Labour and Freedom Alliance, it tries to trap the working class within the framework of the existing political and social order.

The SEG is irreconcilably opposed to the unprincipled pseudo-left tendencies that do not join these alliances, but nevertheless work to support them.

One is the Revolutionary Workers' Party (DİP), the Turkish sister organization of the Workers' Revolutionary Party (EEK) in Greece. They have allied themselves with the Russian neo-Stalinist tendencies supporting the reactionary Putin regime against NATO's imperialist aggression. Having supported the pro-NATO and pro-EU HDP until the June 2018 elections, the DİP has pledged to support the Stalinist Communist Movement of Turkey (TKH) in these elections. However, the TKH continues its alliance within the SGB with the TKP and the Left Party, which endorsed Kılıçdaroğlu in the presidential election.

The same is true of the Socialist Laborers Party (SEP in Turkish), the former Turkish section of the International Socialist League (ISL), which enthusiastically backs NATO's war against Russia. It fielded its own independent parliamentary candidate in Ankara but also called for support for the Labour and Freedom Alliance, which lined up behind Kılıçdaroğlu, making it clear that its opposition to the capitalist establishment is of a thoroughly hypocritical and dishonest character.

The SEG strongly rejects the claim that the masses of workers and youth have to choose between the two right-wing bourgeois alliances and their supporters. Whatever their outcome, the elections will not solve any of the fundamental problems facing the working class. This is because none of these problems can be solved on a national basis, or without a frontal social assault on the wealth of finance capital.

None of the parties participating in the elections are capable of solving these fundamental problems. They are in the imperialist war camp, fully

loyal to NATO, ignoring the pandemic and the mass deaths and abandoning the masses to destruction and death in the face of the expected new earthquakes. Their response to the deepening economic crisis, whatever their tactical differences, will be to impose a severe program of social austerity on the working class on behalf of the banks and big business.

The SEG rejects the pessimism promoted by the pseudo-left to justify adaptation to the national bourgeoisie. The contradictions of global capitalism that lead to imperialist war, social counterrevolution and dictatorship are at the same time giving rise to the upsurge of a global movement of the working class.

The Sri Lankan working class and the rural poor are mobilizing again against the new head of state, as bourgeois rule and fundamental problems remain intact after last year's mass popular uprising that forced the president to flee the country.

Strikes and protests are growing in countries across Europe. In France, the struggle of the working class against President Emmanuel Macron's pension cuts, and the naked capitalist state violence it faces, raise the need to overthrow Macron and transfer power to the working class.

In the United States, the heart of the imperialist system, the working class is increasingly radicalized. The most conscious political expression of this has been the campaign by Will Lehman, the candidate of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), who won nearly 5,000 votes in the United Auto Workers (UAW) election on a socialist platform calling for the "transfer of power to the rank and file."

After months of mass protests have shaken the Iranian regime, the most massive protests in Israel's history have emerged against Prime Minister Netanyahu's attempted judicial coup. Conditions are ripening for the political unity of the Jewish, Arab, Iranian and other workers across the Middle East.

In Turkey, where there has been an unprecedented wave of wildcat strikes in the past year, major class battles are also on the agenda, whatever the outcome of the elections. The way forward is to arm the emerging movement of the working class in opposition to the trade union bureaucracy with a Trotskyist program and the lessons of history embodied in the ICFI's decades-long struggle against Stalinism, Pabloism and bourgeois nationalism.

## **NATO's war against Russia and the ruling elite in Turkey**

The raging conflict with Russia in Ukraine, north of the Black Sea, is a US-led NATO powers' imperialist war that could quickly engulf Turkey, Europe and the rest of the world.

The Erdoğan government's attempt to mediate between NATO-backed Ukraine and Russia is, in the final analysis, due to the Turkish bourgeoisie's close economic, military and political ties with both NATO and Russia. However, the escalation of the war is narrowing Ankara's ability to maneuver between NATO and Russia, forcing it to choose its side openly.

The Turkish bourgeois political establishment's unanimous approval in parliament of Finland's NATO membership, itself a serious escalation in the war against Russia, was an undeniable declaration of its pro-imperialist and reactionary character.

This was a striking confirmation of the Theory of Permanent Revolution of Leon Trotsky, the co-leader with Vladimir Lenin of the October Revolution of 1917 and founder of the Fourth International. As Trotsky explained nearly 90 years ago,

With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy* and *national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.

On the centenary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the bourgeoisie is even more incapable than a century ago of fulfilling its tasks of securing independence from imperialism or establishing a democratic regime.

The war that NATO, rallied behind by the bourgeoisie in Turkey, provoked in Ukraine last year was a product of the almost uninterrupted imperialist aggression of US imperialism since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the eastward expansion of NATO.

In this imperialist aggression, countless countries from Iraq to Yugoslavia, Afghanistan to Syria have been destroyed, millions of people have been killed, and tens of millions have become refugees. Thousands of people have drowned in the Mediterranean because the European Union has implemented a “Fortress Europe” policy to prevent refugees from reaching the continent.

The Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie’s complicity in these wars and their efforts to get crumbs from the imperialist plunder have had devastating consequences. Erdoğan played a significant role in the regime-change war engineered by the CIA in 2011 to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which led to more than 500,000 deaths.

At the same time, Erdoğan’s NATO-backed “peace process” with the Kurdish nationalist Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) collapsed in 2015 when US imperialism made the People’s Protection Units (YPG) its main proxy force in Syria. The fear that the emergence of a US-backed Kurdish state in Syria could trigger a similar outcome in Turkey terrified Ankara, driving it to renewed conflict. In this, the Erdoğan government, which was bent on crushing the PKK-YPG and the HDP with violence, largely received the support of the CHP.

The growing tensions between Ankara and its imperialist allies erupted violently in the failed NATO-backed coup against Erdoğan in 2016. Having survived the coup attempt due to mass protests against it, Erdoğan continued to seek a deal with his NATO allies. This exposes the position of the Turkish bourgeoisie, which is deeply tied to imperialism and fears the threat of the working class above all.

However, while Erdoğan’s People Alliance advocates maneuvering between the US-led NATO powers on the one hand and Russia and China on the other, Kılıçdaroğlu’s Nation Alliance promises to better serve NATO imperialism. During his visit to the United States last October, Kılıçdaroğlu declared, far more explicitly than Erdoğan: “We think we should side with Ukraine in the Russia-Ukraine war.”

US President Biden and his European allies, who have openly or covertly declared their support for Kılıçdaroğlu against Erdoğan, see Kılıçdaroğlu as a more reliable ally. In fact, Kılıçdaroğlu has done his best to reassure the imperialist powers on this. The CHP, which backed Finland’s NATO membership, promises that if it takes power, Sweden’s membership will be quickly approved by the parliament.

There is no reason to think that, if elected, Kılıçdaroğlu would not face all the same conflicts that the Turkish bourgeoisie faced under Erdoğan with NATO, ending in a confrontation with the Kurdish nationalists and Turkey’s imperialist allies. However, his campaign has made clear that it is firmly oriented to improving relations with imperialism.

## The collapse of democratic forms of rule

Last year, Kılıçdaroğlu claimed that NATO is “the guarantor of democracy in the 21st century.” In reality, the US-led NATO powers have been at the epicenter of anti-democratic operations against elected governments worldwide throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, including the 2014 coup in Ukraine and the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey.

The collapse of democratic forms of government has found its most striking expression in leading NATO powers, the United States and France. President Macron is trying to impose pension cuts opposed by three quarters of the French people through violence of the capitalist state controlled by the financial oligarchy. In the US, where Trump attempted a coup d’état to overthrow the election results on January 6, 2021, President Biden said he is not sure whether democracy will exist in the next decade.

Turkey’s fragile “democracy” is not immune to these broader processes. It experienced an attempted coup just seven years ago, to which Erdoğan responded by accelerating the move towards an authoritarian presidential regime. Should factions in the bourgeoisie in Turkey intervene to try to tamper with or steal the election, workers and youth must massively oppose it.

The increasing drive of the ruling class everywhere towards dictatorial forms of rule is however rooted in the international crisis of the capitalist system and cannot be eliminated by a change of government. Explaining the emergence of dictatorial regimes in Europe, Trotsky wrote in 1929:

By analogy with electrical engineering, democracy might be defined as a system of safety switches and circuit breakers for protection against currents overloaded by the national or social struggle. ... Under the impact of class and international contradictions that are too highly charged, the safety switches of democracy either burn out or explode. That is essentially what the short circuiting of dictatorship represents.

The Erdoğan government, like its counterparts around the world, has presided over a massive transfer of wealth from the working class to the financial oligarchy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The overwhelming majority of working people live in poverty, struggling to stem the loss of their real wages even as annual real inflation rises over 100 percent. This social counterrevolution, reflected in the increase of the Turkish banking sector’s net profits by over 350 percent in 2022, is supported by all factions of the ruling elites.

Kılıçdaroğlu has made clear that he plans to form a government serving the interests of international and Turkish finance capital, regardless of his demagogic rhetoric against the big corporations close to Erdoğan. Kılıçdaroğlu’s “solution” to the deepening economic crisis is to tighten ties with the financial circles in New York and London, where the main culprits for the huge cost of living and impoverishment facing the Turkish and international working class are located. To this end, he has recruited Ali Babacan, Erdoğan’s former chief economic official. Kılıçdaroğlu’s program to follow the US and European central banks in raising interest rates to curb inflation means economic stagnation, widespread layoffs and austerity.

The electoral promises of the Nation Alliance to improve social conditions, restore democratic rights and return to a parliamentary system are worthless. The global crisis of capitalism and the upsurge of the class struggle, which drive the development of Erdoğan’s right-wing authoritarian regime, will intensify worldwide, regardless of the election’s outcome. In any case, the working class will face a showdown with the new bourgeois government.

## The pro-imperialist role of Kurdish nationalism

The Sosyalist E'itlik Grubu is uncompromisingly opposed to the state repression of the Kurdish people and politicians. The basic democratic rights of the Kurdish people must be recognized, and political prisoners released. However, our principled defense of democratic rights does not in any way entail supporting bourgeois-nationalist movements. The pro-imperialist record of Kurdish nationalism is a striking example of the bankruptcy of nationalism and its lack of progressive content.

The escalation of NATO's war against Russia has once again revealed that the claim that the HDP should be supported against war and for peace is a political trap and a fraud. It did not participate in the vote because it did not oppose Finland's membership in NATO. Repeating the rhetoric of the NATO powers, it declared that "Finland's security concerns are legitimate."

This attitude of the HDP, with its false "anti-imperialist" rhetoric, is in line with the historical record of Kurdish nationalism and its orientation to imperialism. It welcomed the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, and hailed the YPG's alliance with the US in Syria as the "Rojava Revolution." The HDP, represented in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, has strong ties with the German Social Democrats and Greens, who have played a central role in NATO's war against Russia.

The HDP maintained political cooperation with the Erdoğan government until 2015, in the name of the "peace process" supported by the US and the EU. Then it gradually turned towards the CHP after the end of this process, amid an escalating crackdown by the Erdoğan government, which was largely backed by the CHP. The HDP claimed at that time that an agreement with Erdoğan would bring "peace and democracy." Today, it is now spreading the same illusions about the CHP-led Nation Alliance.

The SEG vehemently rejects these claims as a deception that will only produce new disasters for the working class and the Kurdish people. Resolving the Kurdish question and stopping the carnage in the Middle East requires the working class to mobilize and take power on the basis of an international socialist program against imperialism and its bourgeois proxies.

The only way forward is for the workers to unite with their brothers and sisters of all nationalities in the Middle East and in the imperialist countries in the struggle against war and oppression and for the building of socialism throughout the Middle East and the world.

## The bankruptcy of the pseudo-left

The Sosyalist E'itlik Grubu opposes both the Erdoğan regime and a possible Kılıçdaroğlu presidency from the standpoint of the international working class. It rejects as a blatant lie the claim of the pseudo-left forces, including TİP, Labour Party (EMEP), TKP, Left Party and various Pabloite/Morenoite tendencies, that a Kılıçdaroğlu presidency will improve social and democratic conditions. By trying to channel the growing social opposition behind the Nation Alliance, these forces once again reveal their pro-imperialist, anti-worker character.

The TİP, which entered parliament in the 2018 elections on the lists of the HDP, today plays a critical role in leading the masses looking for a left-wing alternative to the Erdoğan regime and capitalism outside the right-wing Nation Alliance to a dead end. Founded in 2017 after a split within the Stalinist TKP in 2014, the TİP has grown rapidly in the past year with

the support of the pro-bourgeois opposition media.

The real character of the TİP was most clearly demonstrated in its refusal to oppose Finland's membership of NATO in the parliamentary vote. This was a very conscious decision, which was the result of turning to the pro-imperialist HDP and the Nation Alliance, and not to the working class, where there is an overwhelming opposition to NATO.

TİP leader Erkan Bağ declared that if Erdoğan loses the elections, "the rule of the enemies of the workers" will come to an end. In reality, the economic crisis and the social attacks of the ruling class will deepen, whichever candidate wins. The global crisis of capitalism that is shaking Turkey will not end if Kılıçdaroğlu, another right-wing, pro-NATO bourgeois politician, replaces Erdoğan as president or if Erdoğan loses his parliamentary majority. Stopping the crisis requires that the working class take power into its own hands through a socialist revolution in Turkey and internationally.

The CHP's anti-worker character is evident in the policies of the municipalities it governs. After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, both the CHP and its supporters in the DİSK union confederation backed the government's policy of "profits before lives" from the outset. While the CHP dictated this policy in the municipalities it governed, DİSK supervised workers who worked in unsafe conditions. The CHP responded to workers who went on strike in its municipalities in Istanbul by accusing them of "serving the government" and working to break the strikes.

One of the dirtiest expressions of the pseudo-left organizations' support for the Nation Alliance is their deafening silence on Kılıçdaroğlu's xenophobic program. Millions of refugees fleeing the wars in Afghanistan and Syria, in which Ankara was complicit, live in Turkey without the most basic rights. Kılıçdaroğlu has long sought to divert growing social opposition against them in a reactionary direction. For two years, he has pledged to "repatriate," that is, to deport them, in cooperation with the EU.

The Sosyalist E'itlik Grubu categorically rejects the xenophobic policy of the Nation Alliance and the pseudo-left forces behind it. It calls on workers instead to defend refugees. Everywhere, refugees, victims of imperialist war, should have the right to live and work in the country of their choice with equal rights, including citizenship.

The adaptation of the pseudo-left forces to the Nation Alliance reflects the fact that they represent affluent sections of the middle class seeking a better position under capitalism. The record of their international allies, such as Syriza in Greece, the Left Party in Germany and Podemos in Spain, in local or national power, is a warning to workers and youth.

In Spain, Podemos, in government with the big business Socialist Party, is an ardent supporter of NATO's war against Russia and violently crushes workers' strikes. The Left Party supports the return of German imperialism and imposes harsh austerity policies in the states where it governs.

Syriza, which came to power in 2015, imposed on the Greek people the severe austerity program of the European Union and the big banks. It set up brutal internment camps for refugees in Greece as part of the EU's dirty deal with the Erdoğan government. Syriza leader and former prime minister Alexis Tsipras developed military and political ties with the Zionist regime in Israel and the bloody Al-Sisi dictatorship in Egypt.

Syriza, which aims to return to power in the Greek elections on May 21, advocates a hard-line policy on behalf of French-backed Greece in the conflict with Turkey over oil and gas in the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea islands. Kılıçdaroğlu, behind whom the pseudo-left has rallied, also declared his support for an aggressive policy against Greece in line with the reactionary interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie. In 2017, he pledged: "I will come and take all these islands."

The Sosyalist E'itlik Grubu seeks to establish the political independence of the working class by demonstrating the political and class gulf that separates the struggle for Trotskyism within the working class from the

petty-bourgeois nationalist politics of the pseudo-left groups. Only through this struggle to clearly distinguish the interests of the international working class from those of the bourgeoisie can the working class be prepared for the struggle for political power.

### **What does the SEG advocate?**

- **Mobilize the Turkish and international working class against NATO imperialism and the danger of nuclear world war.**

The Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu supports the campaign of the ICFI's youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), to build a global movement of workers and youth against the war. The SEG opposes Putin's reactionary invasion of Ukraine, but it irreconcilably opposes pseudo-left forces that use it as an excuse to support US-NATO imperialist war.

The war in Ukraine, which threatens humanity with a nuclear conflict, has nothing to do with "national defense." This war, a devastating consequence of the Stalinist dissolution of the USSR in 1991, is a continuation of the US-led 30 years of imperialist war—from the Balkans to the Middle East, from North Africa to Central Asia. In the final analysis, there is no national solution to the war, which arises from the contradictions of global capitalism. The only progressive solution lies in the revolutionary intervention of the international working class.

In Turkey, as around the world, the overwhelming majority of working people are against the war in Ukraine. A poll conducted last year found that 80 percent of the population in Turkey was against the war. This is the social basis on which an anti-war movement in Turkey and internationally must be based. This movement can only be built on the basis of an international socialist program, independent of and against the entire pro-imperialist political establishment.

The SEG also advocates the withdrawal of all imperialist powers from the Middle East, as well as the withdrawal of Turkey's troops abroad, including in Syria and Iraq.

- **A Zero-COVID policy**

Whatever the unscientific claims of governments, the COVID-19 pandemic continues. SEG advocates for a Zero-COVID policy that, when implemented, has proven hugely successful in stopping the spread of the virus and saving lives. But this policy could only eliminate COVID-19 on a global scale, and it requires workers to mobilize by forming rank-and-file safety committees in workplaces and schools.

The SEG supports the ICFI's Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic. It fights to educate the working class on the necessity for a Zero-COVID policy and calls on workers and scientists to participate in this inquest.

- **Build committees of action, organize workers independently of the union bureaucracies to fight austerity and repression**

The ICFI is the only political tendency seeking to build and link up internationally workplace organizations of struggle, independent of and opposed to the corrupt, pro-corporate unions. The fuel for such a movement is to be found in workers' anger at social conditions created by decades of austerity and police-state repression under successive governments of all colorations.

Turkey ranks lowest among the countries in Europe in terms of wages. Though the monthly poverty line for a family of four exceeds 33,000 liras (\$1,700), a significant portion of the working population tries to survive on a minimum wage of around 8,500 liras (\$435). With food inflation at 70 percent, many families are far from a healthy diet. Social inequality is surging. By 2022, the share of national income going to the top 20 percent of the population had risen to 48 percent (the highest level in 16 years).

For decades, trade unions have collaborated, overtly or covertly, with the government in eliminating social rights and driving down wages.

The fight to reconquer basic social rights, end COVID-19 deaths and oppose imperialist war cannot be entrusted to the national union bureaucracies in corporatist talks with the state. Any serious industrial struggle against transnational corporations requires workers to organize independently of the unions and across national borders. For that purpose, the SEG advances the ICFI's call to build the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

- **For the expropriation of the financial aristocracy to meet urgent social needs**

The financial aristocracy has been enriched by trillions of dollars through the printing of public money by major central banks. Handed over to financial speculators, these funds fueled inflation and massively increased state debt, but boosted stock markets. Studies show that the increase in corporate profits is a key driver of inflation.

A parasitic aristocracy, who obtained profits on their ill-gotten capital by making workers labor in unsafe conditions at the cost of millions of lives in the pandemic, is looting society. It was also behind the condemnation of countless people to death in buildings known to be unsafe in the Turkey-Syria earthquake. The SEG advocates the immediate provision of decent and safe housing conditions for the hundreds of millions of people living in the Marmara region and other areas where major earthquakes and similar "natural disasters" are expected, in Turkey and internationally.

Public funds pilfered by private hands must be impounded and used to serve the urgent social needs of the population. This requires the transfer of state power into the hands of the working class, across Europe and beyond.

Such proposals, built on the strength of the international working class, the struggle for its political independence and the necessity of its struggle for power, identify the SEG as a Marxist-internationalist tendency oriented to the working class—that is, a Trotskyist organization—and fundamentally distinguish it from all other political tendencies in Turkey.

### **Build the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi!**

The elections will not solve any social and democratic problem facing the working class and youth. The decisive problem in Turkey and globally is the question of historical perspective and political leadership. This means building the ICFI and its sections, the Socialist Equality Parties, as the revolutionary vanguard of the working class.

Against pseudo-left forces that seek to drive workers and youth to the national bourgeoisie, the ICFI and SEG fight to prepare the working class for the objectively revolutionary crisis that is developing worldwide. The conflict that increasingly pits workers everywhere against the capitalist state cannot be resolved by "reforming" state power, but by transferring it to the working class through socialist revolution. The theoretical and political basis for this struggle, which requires the building of a Trotskyist party prior to the outbreak of mass revolutionary struggles, is Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution, as it was in the October Revolution of 1917 led by the Bolshevik Party.

The SEG bases itself on the historical struggles of the ICFI, the only political party that represents the continuity of the Marxist-Trotskyist movement. As we stated last year in our resolution to join the ICFI and to found the SEP, "This continuity goes back to the founding of the Left Opposition under the leadership of Leon Trotsky in 1923 to defend the strategy and program of the world socialist revolution against nationalist Stalinist degeneration. It was this strategy and program that guided the

October Revolution in 1917 led by the Bolshevik Party in Russia under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.”

Turkey has an important place in the history of the Trotskyist movement, which celebrates its centenary this year. Not only did Trotsky write several of his most important works in Istanbul, where he was exiled as an implacable opponent of the Stalinist bureaucracy, he also called for the founding of the Fourth International from Prinkipo in 1933.

The International Committee, which since 1953 has led the Fourth International, founded in 1938 under the leadership of Trotsky, has defended Trotskyism against Stalinism, Social Democracy, Pabloism and all forms of petty-bourgeois nationalism. It is today the only organization fighting to solve the question of the revolutionary leadership of the international working class.

In the struggle to build the Socialist Equality Parties in Turkey and across the Middle East, the SEG works in close political cooperation with its ICFI sister parties in Europe and around the world, fighting to mobilize the working class against imperialist war and for a world socialist revolution.

The SEG calls on all those who agree with this statement and seek a genuinely socialist alternative in the struggle against imperialist war, social counterrevolution and the police state to join the struggle to build the ICFI and the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi.



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