

Turkish elections: Morenoites rally behind K?l?çdarolu, HDP and Stalinist T?P

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The May 14 presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey expose the reactionary role of petty-bourgeois Morenoite tendencies that broke with Trotskyism decades ago. They have lined up behind the Nation Alliance, led by Kemal K?l?çdarolu's Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), through the pseudo-left Workers' Party of Turkey (T?P) and the Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP).

The Labour and Freedom Alliance (EÖ?), of which the HDP and T?P are members, is backing K?l?çdarolu against President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an and his People Alliance. A key factor bringing together the Turkish bourgeois opposition led by K?l?çdarolu and the Kurdish HDP is their more open orientation towards NATO. Both promise to more reliably serve the interests of the NATO imperialist powers than Erdo?an has as president.

Washington and European capitals hope that a K?l?çdarolu presidency will further integrate Ankara into aggressive NATO policies targeting Russia and China. K?l?çdarolu has given assurances to NATO and international financial circles, seeking to contain widespread social opposition to the war and the Erdo?an regime, with the support of pseudo-left forces.

The Turkish supporters of both the main Morenoite organizations are playing a leading role within the pseudo-left forces who are setting this political trap. The Workers' Democracy Party (?DP) is running parliamentary candidates in Istanbul and Izmir on T?P lists, calling to support the HDP-led EÖ?. The ?DP is the Turkish section of the Morenoite International Workers' Unity (UIT-CI), which the Argentine Socialist Left (Izquierda Socialista) is also a member.

The *K?rm?z? Gazete*, the sympathizing group of the Morenoite International Workers League (LIT-CI) in Turkey, also backs the EÖ? in the parliamentary elections and K?l?çdarolu in the presidential election. The Brazilian United Socialist Workers' Party (Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado, PSTU) is main party of the LIT-CI.

The Morenoites' alignment behind the bourgeois opposition in Turkey seeks to drive the growing social opposition to the right-wing Erdo?an regime into a dead end and prevent the development of a genuine Trotskyist challenge of the working class to capitalism and war.

As the Ukraine war escalates towards a direct military clash between NATO and Russia, both of which have nuclear weapons, their support for the efforts to chain workers and youth to the bourgeois opposition via through Kurdish nationalism and Stalinism is politically criminal. Their attribution of a "progressive" role to Kurdish bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism amounts to a rejection of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution, now only defended by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

The Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (SEG), the Turkish section of the ICFI, strongly rejects the claim that the masses of workers and youth have to choose between the two right-wing bourgeois alliances and their supporters.

The Nation Alliance, like Erdo?an's People's Alliance, is a coalition of

reactionary, pro-imperialist bourgeois parties. It includes K?l?çdarolu's CHP, the far-right Good Party, which broke away from Erdo?an's ally, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and the Islamist Felicity Party from which the AKP was born. It also includes the Future Party of Ahmet Davuto?lu, Erdo?an's former prime minister and supporter of his war policies in the Middle East; and the DEVA Party of Ali Babacan, Erdo?an's former economy minister, a trusted tool of finance capital.

The T?P was founded in 2017 following a split with the Stalinist Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) in 2014, and entered parliament on HDP lists in the 2018 elections. According to a recent statement by T?P leader Erkan Ba?, the party's membership has increased from around 6,000 last year to over 40,000.

Masses of the workers and especially the youth are indeed looking for a left alternative to the two right-wing factions of the bourgeoisie, the People Alliance and the Nation Alliance. However, the T?P plays a crucial role in driving them behind K?l?çdarolu and into a political dead end.

In a statement, the ?DP announced that "Despite the various political differences," it called for votes for the HDP-led EÖ?. Then it continued:

We have taken this position a step further within the framework of the proposal of the Workers' Party Turkey (T?P) to open its lists to the candidates of the Workers' Democracy Party (?DP). As the ?DP, we have decided to take part in the elections on the lists of the T?P in order to raise the option of a labour-oriented break with the One Man regime.

The ?DP claims that this campaign is aimed at "raising a political option that seeks at a radical break with the oppressive One Man regime and the capitalist exploitation order both during and after the election process."

In reality, replacing Erdo?an with another right-wing, pro-NATO bourgeois politician will not change the authoritarian tendencies of the Turkish regime, which are rooted in the crisis of world capitalism and imperialism's drive to a new world war. The HDP, which the ?DP openly supports, and the CHP, which it indirectly backs, are active defenders of capitalism and war.

As for the LIT-CI's *K?rm?z? Gazete*, it issued a statement in March entitled "Erdo?an must be defeated to overthrow the palace regime," declaring: "The bourgeois opposition aims to return to a strengthened parliament[ary regime] and to emerge from the crisis in favour of capital and by improving relations with the West. This bloc [the Nation Alliance], like the other, has a capitalist programme and pro-imperialist policies."

The conclusion that *K?rm?z? Gazete* drew from this was not to reject both pro-imperialist factions of the bourgeoisie, but to line up behind K?l?çdarolu and his pseudo-left allies: "Without putting any hopes on the bourgeois opposition, we will act together with the masses who will

vote for Kemal K?l?çdarolu to stop Erdoğan and the autocratic palace regime... We call on our people to support the Labour and Freedom Alliance candidates and the socialist labour candidates in the parliamentary elections.”

The Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu is irreconcilably opposed to the reactionary attacks of the Erdoğan government against the Kurdish people and the HDP, and defends democratic rights. However, this in no way signifies any political support for the HDP, a pro-NATO bourgeois-nationalist party.

The SEG warns the workers and youth who want to defend democratic rights and oppose the NATO-Russia war and the slaughter in the Middle East: This cannot be done by supporting the HDP. Like their Turkish counterparts, the Kurdish bourgeois nationalists’ policy is based on an alliance with Washington, the global epicenter of imperialist aggression and conspiracies against democratic rights.

In fact, Kurdish nationalism has a long pro-imperialist record, especially since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. While it welcomed the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, it hailed the reactionary alliance of the Syrian-Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) with Washington in the US-led war for regime change in Syria as the “Rojava Revolution.”

The HDP and its Kurdish-nationalist predecessors were an important part of the so-called “peace process” between Erdoğan and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which finally collapsed in 2015.

At that time, while many pseudo-left parties enthusiastically supported collaboration with Erdoğan as a path to “peace and democracy,” the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu declared that it was, in fact, a “peace process” between the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies under the auspices of the US and European imperialism. The aim was to reach an agreement to participate together in the ongoing imperialist war of plunder in the Middle East led by Washington.

As US imperialism made the YPG its main proxy force, there emerged the prospect of an independent Kurdish state in Syria. This could ultimately lead to the formation of a similar regime within the current borders of Turkey, which has 15 or 20 million Kurds. Fearing this, the Erdoğan government chose to end its fragile negotiations with the PKK and re-launch a bloody conflict.

Since then, the HDP, which has been subjected to an anti-democratic police-state repression of the Erdoğan government, has increasingly turned to an alliance with the CHP on the basis of the same pro-imperialist and bourgeois-nationalist bankrupt perspective.

The reactionary and fragile character of this CHP-HDP alliance can be seen in the CHP’s support for Erdoğan’s onslaught against the Kurds. Until the last vote in 2021, the CHP voted in favour of Erdoğan’s military operations against Kurdish nationalist militias in Syria and Iraq. Moreover, it was the CHP’s vote in favor of this constitutional amendment that led to the lifting of the immunity of HDP deputies and the subsequent state crackdown on the HDP.

The CHP and the HDP, both members of the pro-imperialist Socialist International, have particularly strong links with the German Social Democrats (SPD).

“There is an important cooperation between the HDP and the SPD,” declared SPD co-leader Lars Klingbeil, who visited the HDP last month. HDP co-chair Mithat Sancar responded: “We have a brotherly relationship with the SPD, the German Social Democratic Party... Solidarity and exchange of information will continue during the election process. The solidarity of the democratic forces in Turkey and internationally, both with the SPD and other democratic circles, is essential in this process.”

The HDP’s German allies, the SPD and the Greens, which it calls the “democratic forces,” are in fact central players of NATO’s war against Russia. The coalition government in Germany, which includes these parties, has tripled the armaments budget, using Russian President

Vladimir Putin’s reactionary invasion of Ukraine as a pretext. This is the biggest increase in German military spending since Hitler’s Nazis ruled the country.

The Morenoite support for the T?P, the HDP and the Nation Alliance led by K?l?çdarolu amounts to political support for the close ties of the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie with imperialism. Another expression of these ties is the role of the entire affluent middle class milieu of the pseudo-left, including the Morenoites, in supporting NATO’s imperialist war in Ukraine.

Masses of workers and youth who increasingly are entering into struggle and looking for a left-wing alternative to the capitalist political establishment are moving in a diametrically opposite direction to the pseudo-left. Indeed, the T?P and the Morenoites are moving to the right, adapting themselves to the national bourgeoisie and to the imperialist powers.

The political positions on Finland’s NATO membership, a significant escalation of NATO aggression against Russia, made this very clear.

The unanimous acceptance of Finland’s NATO membership by Erdoğan’s People’s Alliance and K?l?çdarolu’s Nation Alliance was an open declaration of loyalty of the whole ruling class to imperialism. The T?P’s refusal to oppose Finland’s membership of NATO in the parliamentary vote exposed its claims to be anti-NATO and anti-imperialist. This was in fact a conscious political decision intimately related to its adaptation to the Nation Alliance and the HDP, which the ?DP also supports together with the NATO war against Russia.

In last October, K?l?çdarolu declared in the US: “We think we should side with Ukraine in the Russia-Ukraine war.” Before that, he had declared NATO “the guarantor of democracy in the 21st century.” In reality, NATO is an imperialist war alliance hostile to democracy and the international working class since its foundation in the last century.

NATO’s policy of eastward expansion and containment of Russia, especially in last two decades, and the coup it engineered in Kiev in 2014 to overthrow a pro-Russian elected government, were decisive in provoking the war in Ukraine in 2022. They have made the danger of direct war between NATO and Russia greater than ever.

While tactically seeking to maintain a phony “anti-imperialist” position, the HDP also did not oppose NATO enlargement. The HDP’s representative in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Hi?yar Özsoy, stated that although his party did not participate in the vote on Finland, it actually supported NATO. He said: “This is the first time we are doing so in a military agreement. But this time we decided not to take part in this vote because we consider Finland’s security concerns legitimate, and we didn’t want to say ‘no’ either.”

Thus a possible K?l?çdarolu presidency, backed by the HDP and the pseudo-left, has made clear that it will seek to fulfill the program of the international and Turkish finance capital and of NATO. This is in sharp contrast to the social aspirations of the overwhelming majority of the people. Under conditions of deepening of the global crisis of capitalism, this means a program of militarism and social austerity targeting the working class.

The effects of the global economic crisis in Turkey, deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic and NATO’s war against Russia, will intensify regardless of who wins the elections.

K?l?çdarolu’s program for dealing with the massive economic and social crisis is based on tightening ties with the financial circles in New York and London. Following in the footsteps of the US and European central banks, K?l?çdarolu has promised to raise interest rates and, as many economists have noted, is preparing for economic stagnation, widespread layoffs and a draconian austerity program.

He is relying on trade union confederations—in particular, on D?SK, which is controlled by the CHP, HDP and their pseudo-left allies—to implement this program, which will inevitably lead to growing resistance

within the working class.

The D?SK has played an important role in keeping the workers at work since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In some cases, however, despite its best efforts the bureaucracy could not prevent strikes from breaking out.

After a wave of wildcat strikes erupted in Turkey last year amid an upsurge of the class struggle internationally, it has increasingly worked to channel workers' growing anger to the collapse in living standards into the elections, backing forces tied to K?l?çdarolu. A sharp warning is necessary. Should the union bureaucracies fail to contain workers struggles, any new government will use the police state built by Erdo?an against the workers.

At this point, K?l?çdarolu's dirty campaign against refugees in Turkey and the CHP's record of complicity in the state repression against the Kurdish people must serve as a sharp warning to all workers. It is possible that a K?l?çdarolu government would be driven to bloodily suppress the Kurdish nationalist movement for the same reasons as Erdo?an.

The Morenoites' orientation to Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism and their refusal to fight for the political independence of the working class have a long history. The ICFI was founded in 1953 in opposition to a faction led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel that called to liquidate the sections of the Fourth International within the Stalinist and bourgeois nationalist movements. The Morenoites' current position has its roots in their unprincipled reunification with the Pabloites in 1963, refusing to address the critical issues that had led to the 1953 split.

In 1961, the British Trotskyists of the Socialist Labour League opposed those forces in the Trotskyist movement who were turning to reunite with Pabloism, arguing that non-proletarian forces could lead a socialist revolution and that there was no need to build a Trotskyist party. They warned:

The greatest danger confronting the revolutionary movement is liquidationism, flowing from a capitulation either to the strength of imperialism or of the bureaucratic apparatuses in the Labour movement, or both. Pabloism represents, even more clearly now than in 1953, this liquidationist tendency in the international Marxist movement...

Any retreat from the strategy of political independence of the working class and the construction of revolutionary parties will take on the significance of a world-historical blunder on the part of the Trotskyist movement...

These warnings were strikingly confirmed in the decades that followed. Moreno, who advocated an extreme variant of Pabloism opportunism, played a decisive role in the political disarmament of the masses of workers and youth in Argentina and Latin America by adapting to guerrillaism, bourgeois nationalism, Stalinism and Social Democracy.

These tendencies evolved sharply to the right, orienting themselves to imperialism, especially after the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. This shift of the upper middle class can be seen both in the Kurdish nationalists' decades-long support, in the post-Soviet period, for US-led wars in the Middle East and in the Morenoites' policies in Ukraine.

As the recently-leaked documents undeniably have proved, this is a war against Russia under the *de facto* control of US-led NATO powers. In this war, the imperialist powers, using the Ukrainian youth as cannon fodder, aim to inflict a decisive defeat on Russia and bring its vast resources under their control. This is a goal cannot be attained without the involvement of NATO troops in the war, i.e. a direct confrontation between the nuclear powers. Moreover, this conflict is only the beginning of a broader war

against China.

Both Morenoite groupings, the LIT-CI and the UIT-CI, staunchly support the Kiev regime, which is acting as a proxy force for NATO in the US-instigated war in Ukraine. They play an extremely reactionary role, arguing that it is legitimate to support NATO's war aims against the reactionary invasion of the Putin regime in Russia, and that Kiev should be further armed by the NATO powers.

The UIT-CI, to which the ?DP is affiliated, complained that the massive arms deliveries by NATO powers to Ukraine, including battle tanks, were "insufficient." On March 20, it said:

Weapons arrive in Ukraine drop by drop, with the goal not of defeating the Russian invasion but to force Putin into negotiations. That is why, a year after the start of the war, Ukraine remains without the heavy arms it needs to confront the military might of Russia. Ukraine has no almost military aviation and Biden has reaffirmed that he is not authorising the dispatch of the F16 fighter jets that Ukraine demands so much. After a year of rejection, Germany and the US now say that they will send some modern tanks (German Leopard 2s and the Yankee Abrams). But it will be barely a few dozen when the Ukrainian military claim they need a minimum of 300 tanks.

In a statement on February titled "The Shipment of Tanks and Weapons to Ukraine Is Insufficient," the *K?rm?z? Gazete's* LIT-CI declared:

It is imperative that we demand the necessary weaponry and military technology be sent to Ukraine to defeat Putin. In addition to the HIMARS multiple missile launcher system, the Ukrainians demand MGM-140 ATACMS missiles with a range of 300 kilometers. The Ukrainians are also asking for F-15, F-16, and A-10 Thunderbolt II fighter jets (specifically for infantry air support). Without these aircraft, it is impossible to control Ukrainian airspace.

An unbridgeable political gulf separates the ICFI and Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu, which orient to the developing movement of the international working class based on the program of world socialist revolution against imperialist war, and all these pro-imperialist national-opportunist tendencies. Those who want to fight against imperialism and for socialism must draw the necessary political conclusions from these experiences and join in building the world Trotskyist movement and its Turkish section, the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi.



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