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MARXIST LENINIST COMMUNIST PARTY  
Turkey/Northern Kurdistan

## THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN 2008

During the period until November 2008, important developments took place in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan from the point of view of the ruling forces as well as of the working class and labourers. While the clashes within the fascist regime continued, with the generals front standing on one side aiming at defending its own posts of political power and the governing party AKP on the other side aiming at dispossessing the generals from positions of power in order to seize these posts, there have been some certain topics on which the regime has agreed on. These topics are the oppression of the Kurdish national movement, the communist and revolutionary movement, the application of unfettered state terror, the protection of the territorial integrity of Iraq in the Middle East as well as the protection of the status quo, which means the prevention of the formation of a Kurdish state.

On May 4, 2007, the prime minister Tayyip Erdogan and the chief of the general staff Yasar Buyukanit came together for a meeting at Dolmabahce, Istanbul and agreed on these topics. And with the meeting of Erdogan and Bush in November 2007, they came to some results in the context of the role given to the Turkish state within the plans of the USA in the Middle East. Not being able to find a solution for coming out of the quagmire it sunk into in the Middle East and failing to advance in applying its Greater Middle East project, the USA had made some changes in its Middle Eastern policy. In its policies on Iran, Syria and Lebanon, it tries now to use Turkey to go for a dialogue with these countries on which it had tried to establish its hegemony through military aggression before. In return for Turkey's role, the USA gave the Turkish state permission to carry out air raids and a limited land operation in Southern Kurdistan aiming at the liquidation of the PKK. The ruling forces, as they had already agreed on and got the support of the USA for, organised air raids on Southern Kurdistan, on Mount Quandil in December 2007. After that, they realised their 25th cross-border land operation in February 2008, accompanied by the warmonger activities of the media.

However, the Kurdish guerrilla defeated the Turkish army entering Southern Kurdistan and this created a psychological and moral superiority of the Kurdish national movement and cracked the ruling forces' front.

Having suffered a defeat and demoralisation, the generals' front of the ruling forces, accusing each other and having a number of discussions, split into the generals on the one hand and the CHP and MHP on the other hand. Even TUSIAD felt the need to rush and help the generals.

Beginning from March 2008, as the carrot part of the "carrot and stick" policy, the state that did not achieve anything with the military operations in Southern and Northern Kurdistan applied its assimilation plan on the basis of "a single language, a single nation" that is called "Action Plan on Terrorist Acts" and consists of 62 articles. With this plan, the state tried to use elimination of poverty and unemployment, which had become chronic through the colonial policies in Kurdistan, against the Kurdish people as an assimilation weapon. Driveling about economic investments and improvements in the region, Erdogan organised several trips to Kurdistan. However, the Kurdish peoples raised protests with the slogan "We don't want pasta but freedom" put this plan of the state in vain, too.

With its actions in the cities, serhildans (Kurdish uprisings- translator's note), "march to the mountains" and mass demonstrations and rallies from March 8 to Newroz, without hesitation to pay a high price, the Kurdish national movement managed to add will and determination to its successes achieved through military strikes. The national movement exposed the falsehood of the statements "We overthrew the PKK; we disabled its leaders" made by the Turkish state that continuously hailed bombs on the guerrilla. The national movement defended Ocalan with its "Edi Bese" ("Enough is enough!") actions.

Supported through military intelligence of the USA, the Turkish army consistently carries out air raids on Southern Kurdistan; with these raids civilians' residential areas have totally been destroyed and besides the civilians, there has been an especially heavy loss of their animals. In Northern Kurdistan air raids and land operations have constantly been carried out. Nevertheless, due to the resistance and counter-attacks of the guerrilla, the Turkish state became the one that, in fact, has lost. Throughout the country soldiers returned home in coffins. The counter-attacks of the guerrilla and lately, the attack on the police station at Aktutun

leading to the death of 62 soldiers seriously shook the state. While it was said at the meeting of the cabinet joined by the chief of general staff<sup>[1]</sup> and the "security" meetings made at the top of the state that a part of the precautions taken would not be introduced to the public, it was said that the state put 350 million YTL on the side to build 162 new police stations. In addition, it was also declared that a more professional army and police forces will be trained to be sent to the war in Kurdistan. This shows that the colonialism is going to expand its military occupation in Kurdistan and the dirty war carried out against the Kurdish people.

The Kurdish national movement tries to renew its political will that was broken after Ocalan had been taken hostage on the basis of defending Ocalan and imposing its legitimacy. With its struggle led under the slogan "Mr. Ocalan"<sup>[2]</sup> as the second part of the "Edi Bese" action, it ensured consistency in the political struggle.

The Kurdish people's determination to defend the funerals of the guerrilla as a mass and to turn these into political actions is recently among the important developments of the Kurdish national movement. After the lawyers announced that Ocalan held in solitary confinement at Imrali prison had been physically attacked and threatened to be killed, broad and militant protests followed in many Kurdish cities and first of all in Amed (Diyarbakir). Through these actions that also spread to some cities of Turkey although to a lesser degree, the Kurdish people showed that they defend Ocalan despite the state's terror, attacks and massacres. The sit-in in Amed on November 1-3 with the demand "A democratic solution to the Kurdish question", besides thousands of people, also joined by Kurdish MPs and mayors affiliated to the DTP, was an action reflecting the commitment to Ocalan and to the guerrilla.

Turkish Prime Minister Tayip Erdogan who organised a trip to Kurdistan in November under the pretext to participate in some inaugurations was received with big protests of the Kurdish people in Amed, Dersim, Van, Yuksekova, Semdinli and Hakkari closing their shops,

shutting the engines of the vehicles, not collecting any litter, making actions on the streets and fighting with Molotov cocktails and stones against the police attacks.

With the developing guerrilla actions in the countryside and the serhildans in the cities, the Kurdish people show more and more that they are not going to accept anymore the status quo, and they also show that the Turkish state is currently in a deadlock. As a result of this deadlock, the state, that so far rejected any dialogue with the representatives of the formation process of the Kurdish state in the South, is now striving to have talks with the administration of Southern Kurdistan on the struggle against the PKK.

While this is what happens in terms of the Kurdish question, important clashes of the workers' and labourers' front with the fascist dictatorship took place, too. The determination that had been created through the clash of wills on Mayday 2007 made the workers' and labourers' movement experience a new period of action. The struggle rising with the fight of the workers of airways, Telekom, Novamed and TEKEL, the resistances of the shipyard and textile sectors, and many other strikes and resistances reached a new level with the wave of actions developing against the SSGSS<sup>[3]</sup> attacks and the strike de facto realised on February 27-28 at Tuzla shipyards. Both the clash on Mayday 2008 that was the peak of action days of the period from March to May as well as the second Tuzla shipyard strike on June 16 created determination and consistency in the working class' struggle. The insistence of the working class to celebrate Mayday on Taksim Square, the place that was drenched with their blood on Mayday 1977<sup>[4]</sup>, and its fighting against the state's police forces defying the bans and terror of the state was noted down as a crucial political achievement in the struggle of the working class.

The impact of the struggle continuing during this period with the resistance against work-related accidents resulting in the death of workers at Tuzla shipyards' zone and the de facto legitimated strikes led by the

1- The meeting of the cabinet on October 27, 2008 was joined by the chief of general staff as a very unabashed example of fascism in the country. He gave orders to the ministers in relation with the Kurdish question in the name of "informing them".

2- Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK who is kept in Imrali Prison is announced as a "terrorist leader" and it is almost banned to speak of him without a humiliating voice. Many intellectuals and writers received sentences and fines for calling him "Mr. Ocalan". Regarding this situation, the Kurdish people started a campaign of writing solicitudes to the courts demanding to be judged because of the same accusation accepting that they name Ocalan as "Mr. Ocalan". Hundreds of people were arrested during this campaign.

3- Law on Social Insurances and General Health Insurance (SSGSS) is the neoliberal law adopted in 2008 opening the way for the privatisation of the health service.

4- On Mayday 1977, 500 thousand labourers who gathered at Taksim Square in Istanbul were attacked by the counter-guerrilla forces opening fire on them. 36 workers lost their lives as a result of the gunfire and stampede. In 1979, Taksim Square was banned for demonstrations of workers and labourers. This ban still continues.

union Limter-Is was not limited only to this zone. The de facto strikes realised at Tuzla were broadly supported by the society, from unions to student youth organisations, from intellectuals to revolutionary and progressive organisations. First of all, workers from different sectors and many unions affiliated to DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions), KESK (Confederation of Public Employees' Trade Unions) and Turk-Is (Confederation of the Workers' Unions of Turkey) supported the Tuzla strike. The Tuzla strikes distinguished the militant fighting line of the class from the reformist line and put the reformist line on discussion. It exposed to a large extent the reformist and bureaucratic understanding of a union not believing in the working class and showed which way the working class must follow. It ensured the youth turning its face to the working class. It showed how to win by appearing with a new understanding and line of struggle against the attacks of the bourgeoisie, such as privatisation, sub-contracting system, dividing the working class and hindering its unionisation. The Tuzla strikes did not only achieve some ameliorations in terms of work safety and working hours, but managed to gain acceptance for Limter-Is as the representative of the workers by GISBIR, the bosses' organisation of the zone, and the government.

Another progress concerning the workers' and labourers' front is the struggle for the right to housing raised against the demolition of houses of the poor in the labourers' quarters. Mainly under the leadership of the communists, many resistances arose against the state's attacks of demolition in labourers' quarters.

The communists arrested during operations carried out against our party on September 8-12, 2006 in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan convicted fascism with their defence speeches made on June 5-6, 2008 in front of the court. Each of these communists attacked and exposed the fascist dictatorship and the capitalist system from a different point of view and determinedly defended the revolution and socialism; by doing this they became the voice of hope, labour and freedom. As an example of a political defence, the defence speech of our comrade Seyfi Polat, who spoke in the name of

our party and discussed the development line and struggle of our party from its foundation until today, was an international answer given to the attacks of the bourgeoisie on the revolutionary and communist movement in many countries with its "anti-terror" laws. While 3 prisoners were released at this hearing, the decision for the other 20 communists was to continue keeping them behind the bars. At the hearing on October 24, the communist prisoners continued to expose the system.

We must add the actions that were realised by the labourers' front and, first of all, by the youth in the 40th year of the '68 movement and the 37th year of the revolutionary breakthrough of 1971<sup>[5]</sup> to defend and commemorate the revolutionary leaders of that period.

On the government's side, we must note the regime crisis which continued on the basis of the discussion on the headscarf, the change of the constitution, the election of the president and the general elections. The state has concentrated for a long time on the developments around the juridical case to ban the AKP, as well as the Ergenekon operation and the trial<sup>[6]</sup>. The opposition to the AKP that was led directly by the generals in 2007 this year is led by the government focusing on juridical institutions, such as the Constitutional Court and the Court of Appeal, and by this it tries to give the impression that the army has stepped back and the "juridical" struggle has taken its place instead. With the Ergenekon operations the regime arrested those parts of the counter-guerrilla within the state which went out of their control. The government wanted to give the impression that it had found the offenders of some of the massacres (realised by the state through these gangs) as they could not be hidden anymore and to convict those responsible for the coup plans that were exposed, and by all this it wants to acquit itself. Likewise, the organisation called Ergenekon is not only restricted to the retired generals detained, and some of the military and civil bureaucracy, media, capital circles and racist fascist parties, but also many of its crimes were not reflected in the indictment. Although the number of pages is quite high, the scope of the indictment of the case Ergenekon that was started on

5- "Revolutionary breakthrough of 1971" is the term used to express the foundation of three revolutionary organisations, THKO (Popular Liberation Army of Turkey), THKP-C (Popular Liberation Front-Party of Turkey) and TKP-ML (Communist Party of Turkey – Marxist Leninist) by Deniz Gezmiş, Mahir Cayan and Ibrahim Kaypakkaya who had broken off with the revisionist, pro-kemalist and reformist traditions of the leftist movement in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan. Almost all revolutionary organisations of today come from these three organisations.

6 -Ergenekon is claimed to be the name of a counter-guerrilla gang consisting of several elements that were arrested within the last two years. The government presents this as if the counter-guerrilla was brought into justice. In fact, the state, which is the counter-guerrilla itself, has conducted a partial and limited operation of purge and reconstruction within the counter-guerrilla and has arrested some elements that had diverged from the actual line.

October 20 in a hall specially built in a new prison at Silivri is quite limited. While some of the accused, among them also retired generals, were released under the pretext of health problems, the communists try to strengthen the mass initiative of the workers and labourers to demand an account on the streets from the counter-guerrilla state responsible for thousands of forced disappearances and extra-judicial killings.

The trial started against the AKP to ban the party was quickly finalised by the Constitutional Court with a fine and a cut in the treasury help. Under the current socio-political conditions, it was not considered appropriate to ban the AKP, that got "a serious warning" with the pretext to have become "the focus of the actions against secularism". It is clear that the pressure from outside the country, by the EU and the USA "not to ban" the party, as well as TUSIAD's (Turkish Industrialist's and Businessmen's Association –the organisation of the big bourgeoisie) view not advocating such a ban had an impact on this decision. The result of this trial has the characteristics of a temporary reconciliation between the ruling classes. However, this temporary reconciliation between the ruling classes cannot hide the truth that the regime crisis continues in full activity.

The financial crisis that appeared in form of a housing credit crisis in the USA in the housing sector and that continued worldwide as an influential bank and speculation crisis is tending towards influencing the production all over the world and turning into an economical crisis. While first of all the US and the EU imperialists, all imperialist forces try to rescue their collapsing banks and companies with billions of dollars and to overcome the crisis, in Turkey a contradictive stance was displayed at first between the government and the capi-

tal. While the capital institutions said from the beginning that the crisis is coming and that precautions must be taken, the government declared that this crisis would not affect Turkey. Shortly after this, the government mentioned to have taken precautions against the crisis, too. The bosses took the crisis as a pretext and started to dismiss the workers at many workplaces or to make them take unpaid holiday, and the government applies rises in prices one after another to make the workers and labourers pay for the crisis. While the workers, labourers and unions are discussing their struggle against these policies that want to make the labourers pay for this crisis, the communists are stressing the revolutionary opportunities created by the crisis period and the importance to use these opportunities to the greatest advantage.

Following the financial crisis that started as a housing credit crisis in the USA and that means the collapse of the financial system of the neoliberal period, an economical crisis has begun to affect the whole world, taking also the capitalist system in Turkey under its influence. While the Turkish colonialist fascism is occupied with the developments in the sphere of the Kurdish national question, it has also started to invoice the bill of the economic crisis to the workers and labourers through high increases in the prices of basic necessities, such as electricity, potable water and natural gas. The actions and demonstrations that have started to be organised around this issue carry a potential of development that will put the Turkish ruling classes in trouble in this sense as well. The best evaluation and utilisation of the opportunities that are created by both political and economic conditions of crisis falls upon the shoulders of the revolutionary and communist movement as a very important task.



# THE PATH-BREAKING POWER OF THE ZONE-WIDE STRIKE AT TUZLA \*

*A zone-wide strike means overcoming the disintegration of the working class due to flexible and lawless working. This would also mean that a zone-wide strike is at the same time a political action as an answer given and as a posture shown by the shipbuilding workers by founding their class unity against the neoliberal attacks of capital. Besides the demands already declared, the strike included at the same time the shipyard workers' struggle for the right of strike, who work for subcontractors and who because of that do not have an official union they could belong to.*

## Spring came along with the shipbuilders' struggle

On February 27-28, 2008, the shipbuilding workers of Tuzla went into action as if they wanted to confirm the optimistic and hopeful foresights and expectations for 2008 from the revolutionary point of view. It was as if nature was welcoming the spring. Such as the first lights of the spring, the fire of the struggle of the shipbuilding workers who stood up against hard and brutal working conditions –which is a paradise for neoliberal exploitation- was lighted in the ranks of the working class and the oppressed. Suddenly the slogans “hope is in the struggle”, “hope is in unity” and “hope is here” were raised from the Tuzla shipyards, and the most sensitive among the labour and freedom forces started turning their faces towards Tuzla. Without hesitating, they shared their power for the fight and their wishes for success with the shipbuilding workers and the union Limter-Is (Port, Dock, Ship Building And Repair Workers' Union). Those who have a problem with the policies of neoliberal attack of imperialist globalisation, with the collaborating capitalist system and the regime went to the ranks of the shipbuilding workers.

They made a contribution to the success of a very important stage of Limter-Is and the Tuzla shipbuilding workers' struggle.

The Tuzla shipbuilding workers have successfully passed a stage and have won a very important battle. Tuzla shipyards are no longer the former Tuzla

shipyards. The zone-wide strike on February 27-28 has changed everything. Undoubtedly, the struggle continues. The shipbuilding workers and their vanguard union Limter-Is are expecting tough conditions and big duties with a lot of responsibility in the name of the class. Of course, the fight needs to be strengthened even more now, because together with every important step of the struggle, there might be important changes to the situation, new problems, new difficulties and of course, new opportunities will arise, the main focus of the duties might change, etc. As an important step, a turn has taken place; it is now time to determine and analyse the main lines of



development and the experiences of the 16 years of struggle left behind and the conditions that made it possible to win this most difficult phase and to generalise it so that it could be turned into class consciousness; as well as to concentrate on the problems and the probable development of the struggle and to try to develop a future perspective.

### Reflection of the will: Consistency

In every new threshold of the struggle when important success is achieved, it might be as important as ever to show a steady dependence on the revolutionary realism, while analysing the trend of development as well as the preparation and achievement of the success and turning it into class consciousness. Those who contributed to the struggle of the Tuzla

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shipbuilding workers and Limter-Is in the name of defending gratefully what belongs to the class, the proletarian class culture and class ethic must be remembered. For example, the dedicated labour and effort of the first president and founding member of the union Emir Babakus, who managed to re-establish the union after the military coup of 12 September 1980, as well as later, of the president Aydin Kilicdere, who struggled for the existence of Limter-Is in the shipyards zone, must be remembered.

It is now also time to remember the important contributions of the communist workers' leader Suleyman Yeter, Limter-Is member responsible for education who with his revolutionary will had stood up in the torture centre at Vatan Street, Istanbul, like a castle. And we must mention the contributions of our dear Mustafa Barlas too, a communist workers' leader who was a shipyard worker, executive committee member of Limter-Is and who was taken away from us by cancer.

It is normal and understandable that within a long and tough struggle there will always be some who leave the struggle halfway, who regress, who run off in the real sense of the word or whose wills are broken. We must also note those who contributed to the struggle of the shipbuilding workers and Limter-Is in one way or another, although later their will was broken at some point or they were ideologically dissolved.

The shipbuilding workers of Tuzla and their vanguard union Limter-Is reached their current level of struggle, first of all, by managing to lead the struggle permanently. It is known that ensuring this consistency is not an easy job at all, and that it requires superhuman effort, self-sacrifice and power/resistance to bear. Anyone who makes a meaningful contribution to ensure this consistency will find his/her place in the history of the shipbuilding workers and Limter-Is.

### Neoliberal exploitation and a laboratory of class struggle

The industrial hell created by neoliberalism at Tuzla<sup>[1]</sup> fell in the centre of society's agenda in the West by battering the deaf walls of censorship, ignorance and callousness, at a very critical moment when air raids and land operations continued in Southern Kurdistan and the colonial war was reaching its peak. However, this did not happen as suddenly as the lightning striking from a clear sky. The shipbuilding industry at Tuzla was developed in the 1990s as the paradise of surplus value production and accumulation of capital for the neoliberal policies.

1- Tuzla shipyards zone is the largest shipbuilding and repair zone in Turkey. According to state figures, 48 of the 62 shipyards in Turkey are located at Tuzla shipyards' zone. Altogether 563 subcontracting companies are active in this region which has the 95% of the private shipbuilding sector as well as of the repairing industry. Tuzla shipyards' zone has grown rapidly since 2001 and reached rank 5 in the world at shipbuilding and repair sector. It has reached an export volume of 2,5 billion USD. It is supposed that 40.000 workers are employed in fact at these shipyards, while the number of registered workers is 5.300 at the main companies and 8800 at the subcontracting firms. Due to the working conditions at the zone, work-related accidents leading to the death of the workers are quite widespread. 5.800 accidents happened only in 2006. The number of workers who died following work-related accidents registered by the union is 105 so far.

Would the Tuzla shipyards zone have ever turned into a paradise of surplus value exploitation and accumulation of capital without lawless and unregistered work?! Would this have ever been possible without the subcontracting/sub-employing system that all but represents the flexible working spirit of the notorious neoliberal policies? Could the capital's "Tuzla miracle" have happened without the brutal working conditions with workers deprived of insurance and unionisation? Could it have happened where the capitalists did not spend even a thousandth of their capital for at least minimum necessary measures for labour safety? Could it have happened if the life and physical integrity of the workers were given at least some consideration? How could all this have happened if the organization of the workers was not destroyed through the collaborating yellow trade unionism?! If the bourgeois state, first of all with its police and courts, had not taken sides with the shipbuilding bosses and the subcontractors, would all this have happened?! The Tuzla shipyards zone and its growing industry of shipbuilding and ship repair has been a field where the neoliberal policies of the imperialist globalisation are applied in Turkey; it has become a real laboratory.

However, this is not all. All this formed at the same time the conditions of the fact that the Tuzla shipyards zone would turn into a laboratory and a base of the lines of class unionism and class struggle that would develop against the international capital's offensive policies under flexible working conditions without any rules. After the zone-wide strike on February 27-28, we can now for sure say that under imperialist globalisation conditions, the industrial zone of Tuzla is turning and has turned into a developing laboratory of class struggle and class unionism.

**Birth of vanguard unionism under new conditions**  
What happened on February 27-28 at Tuzla? How can the *reality* of the strike be defined? These questions must be analysed from all points of views. If we need to make a basic statement, we could say that on February 27-28 the shipbuilding workers *met, linked up and united* with the union Limter-Is affiliated to DISK<sup>[2]</sup> at Tuzla. Now we can say that the Tuzla shipbuilding workers are organised by passing the common, "classical" meaning of the word. In order to prevent any misunderstandings, we especially want to emphasise here that it is not a typical union.

If the reality of February 28-29 is understood and analysed in the right way, then it will be easy to understand and analyse the Tuzla shipyards zone as a laboratory of the class struggle and the line of class unionism developed against neoliberal policies.

On February 27-28, the shipbuilding workers and their vanguard union Limter-Is *met, linked up and united* with each other in a genuine political strike at Tuzla shipyards. This means that the shipbuilding workers have met and united their will with Limter-Is and thus they have managed to overcome their unorganised situation. The workers have still not all become members of DISK/Limter-Is. However, the will displayed by the Tuzla shipbuilding workers with the strike on February 27-28 is a kind of referendum



made at the shipyards and shows that the workers in total have become a member of Limter-Is as a single will / body!.. This means that the strike on February 27-28 has also the meaning of solving the question of authorisation of Limter-Is at the same time, which is *the question of becoming massive*.

This means that on February 27-28 the *vanguard union* and the shipbuilding workers met and united through the zone-wide strike and solved the question of organisation and authorisation of the union. This *vanguard* course of action has shown great fruits and mainly fulfilled its role.

2- DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions) was founded in 1967 as a result of militant workers' strikes and resistances and was defended by workers against all attacks of the state. Although it lost its militant character and became a reformist confederation, it continues to show a progressive stand and to include some revolutionary class unions.



The particular characteristics of the struggle, or better said the course of struggle, led by Limter-Is at the Tuzla zone since the 1990s, is its the quality of being vanguard. We must stress that as a reality this course of struggle has contained also the systematic and consistent interventions from "outside", that is to say, of a *union-related vanguard power* whose driving force is not directly formed by the shipbuilding workers in the beginning and for many years. We will not deal with the question under which difficulties and lack of opportunities Limter-Is created and developed its vanguard course of action. Nevertheless, we must at least mention that Limter-Is got the power for its unbreakable will from its unshakeable commitment to

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the working class and socialism, and together with this tough will, the union managed to overcome all hard conditions, difficulties and deficiencies and ensured the consistency of the vanguard course of action and struggle.

We have witnessed how the *union-related vanguard power* has quickly grown on February 27-28. Today, the *union-related vanguard power* no longer consists of Limter-Is alone. There are DISK, KESK<sup>[3]</sup>, unions or branches affiliated to Turk-Is<sup>[4]</sup>, small unions, associations, political parties and platforms, intellec-

tuals etc. The catalyser role of the *union-related vanguard power* growing so fast in leading the strike of February 28-29 to success is very important. However, it must also be stressed that the success and realisation of the *union-related vanguard power's* growth is a result and achievement of the *vanguard course of action*. It was also necessary that those powers who let the *vanguard union* grow also had to be won.

### The political characteristic of the zone-wide strike and its ideological influence

The strike at Tuzla shipyards zone was realised not only at one or several shipyards, but throughout the whole zone. As Tuzla shipyards represent more than 90% of the shipbuilding sector in Turkey, this strike at the same time meant to be a strike of the shipbuilding sector. This was a *strike throughout the whole zone, a zone-wide strike, a strike of the shipbuilding sector* or with the same meaning, the strike of the shipbuilding workers of Tuzla zone.

But what kind of *zone-wide strike* was this? Of course it directly and immediately targeted neither the government nor the state. Actually, the Tuzla shipbuilding workers did not even aim at the launch of a law or achieving a right that they did not have before! They demanded to stop working illegally, unregistered and uninsured and they demanded the application of the Law for Heavy and Dangerous Sectors at shipyards. They demanded the laws to be applied. They demanded an end to the work-related accidents<sup>[5]</sup> leading to death, and for that purpose the abolition of subcontracting companies and the acceptance of organisation in trade-unions. From this point of view, the zone-wide strike on February 27-28 could also be defined in some way as a strike claiming rights. What gave the zone-wide strike on February 27-28 its political character, was mainly and first of all one crucial point on which the union Limter-Is focused: the acceptance of the union as the representative of the workers by the bosses' organisation GISBIR<sup>[6]</sup> as well as the solution of the question of removing all obstacles in front of the workers to organise themselves at Limter-Is which means that

3- KESK (Confederation of the Public Employees' Unions) was founded in the 1990s through the militant struggle of the public employees, the teachers at the first rank.

4-Turk-Is (Confederation of Workers' Unions of Turkey) is another trade union confederation founded by the state in the 1950s in order to hinder the development of independent revolutionary trade unions.

5- In Turkey and Northern Kurdistan, work-related accidents are called "work-related murders" by the workers and trade unions in order to expose the lies of the bosses and the state that these deaths come out of coincidences and accidents and not of the lack of labour safety measures.

6- GISBIR (Union of Shipbuilding Industrialists and Businessmen) is the organisation of the shipyards' bosses.

they can organise themselves in general. This point was combined with or included in all other demands. However, it is a fact that the question of unionisation has been merged with the other most urgent, most essential demands!

A zone-wide strike means overcoming the disintegration of the working class due to flexible and lawless working. This would also mean that it is at the same time a political action as an answer given and a posture shown by the shipbuilding workers by founding their class unity against the neoliberal attacks of capital. Besides the demands already declared, the strike included at the same time the shipyard workers' struggle for the right to strike, who work for subcontractors and who because of that do not have an official union they could belong to.

On the other hand, the shipyard sector being located mainly at Tuzla gives the strike at the same time the characteristic of a sectoral strike. This sectoral strike that according to the law can only be realised within periods of collective agreements by the authorised union was realised by a union that got the de facto authorisation from the workers and in no relation at all with the official Collective Agreements period.

Also, the fact that it was not a legal but a de facto – legitimate struggle makes the strike achieve a political characteristic.

The polarisation, separation and the appearance of two political fronts, the fronts of two different classes that were created with the zone-wide strike on February 27-28 reflect the political characteristics of the strike: On February 27-28 there were the Tuzla shipbuilding workers, Limter-Is, the unions DISK, KESK and others, associations, artists, political parties and platforms on the street on the one hand; and there were GISBIR, the government, the police and yellow union Dok Gemi-Is as their ally or collaborator, on the other!

The allegation of the Minister of Labour that Limter-Is "seeks after something ideological" reflected his ideological and class stance and front. With the bourgeois ideology that is packed with so-called hostility towards ideology, the workers have been kept away from the socialist ideology for years and by being ideologically disarmed, they have been led to surrender. This was the way to leave the unions without power, strength and spirit. Yes, now it was time for class struggle and ideological trade-unionism!

There were also ideological results of the struggle against work-related accidents leading to death at

Tuzla and the zone-wide strike and these are very important. "Class struggle", "brutal capitalism", "working class" and such terms have come to the agenda and have been discussed again. An ideological wind was blown in the public that made even the columnists of bourgeois newspapers revolt (!) against brutal capitalist exploitation. The results of the imperialist globalisation attack on the working class were, as it happened concretely in the case of Tuzla, exposed to the broad masses. And the concrete case of the shipyards that have always be on the agenda with ship launching ceremonies and with successful foreign exchange income, gained a place in the memories this time with the work-related accidents and the bloody accumulation of capital. It went even so far that in a press conference a day before the strike the boss of the Sedef Shipyard Murat Kalkavan had said: "We are no criminals. Our crime is to invest money into production and grow too much. We can't make the death toll reduce to zero. Without even knowing the structure of the sector, they charge us for being responsible even for those who commit suicide or die at home. In near future, they will make us responsible for all deaths happening at Tuzla." This speech showed the level of ideological pressure put on them.

On the other hand; the realisation of a strike throughout a zone where the production is highly subcontracted-fragmented has played the role of opening or clearing the way by being a hard blow against the open or hidden pessimistic thoughts that the instrument of strike can not be carried out at all because of the fragmentation of production. It has proved to the friends as well as enemies that a strike can be carried out even at a zone of a subcontracting system.

### **Focusing on the main link of the chain**

How did Limter-Is meet with the shipbuilding workers of Tuzla, how did it unite with them or linked to them? There could be a lot of things to be said on this point. And this question can be discussed from many points of view. In one way, it can be said that this article is at the same time a holistic answer to this question. However, if we reduce the question to what was and is the basic or main coil that made the union meet with the shipbuilding workers of Tuzla or unite with them, then the question will get a more special and concrete meaning.

This question has to do with Limter-Is' stance towards the questions of the shipyards zone, its stance towards the workers' problems and demands and its relation style with them. The vanguard line of Limter-Is gets its power from, first of all, the commit-



ment and trust in the working class as well as from the faith in socialism. This commitment and trust excludes and rejects any alienation from or indifference towards the class and the class' problems. Undoubtedly, if trust and commitment to the class do not take a concrete, practical form, they will remain abstract, and this will be the first step towards alienation from the class.

Limter-Is has always shown a constant and intense interest at the highest level in the problems and the demands of the shipbuilding workers working in the shipyards zone of Tuzla both in terms of the zone in general and in terms of every single shipyard. Its attitude is to understand the problems and demands, to take them as its own with full determination and by focusing on the main link of the chain, to develop a line of struggle that would be able to solve the problem or to get a result. Through these problems and demands, it has established relations with the workers who have never stopped at the door of the union, but who face with such problems every day, even every minute.

During Limter-Is' 20-year struggle in the Tuzla zone, the following problems and demands have always been an important gravity centre: the amelioration of the infernal working conditions, end of work-related accidents, safety of life and physical integrity of the workers, end of lawless and unsafe working conditions, end of working without insurance and without unionisation, payment of the wages entitled to them... The union leadership, the vanguard union of

the shipbuilding workers, has more and more focused on the end of the work-related accidents, the amelioration of the brutal working conditions as well as the abolition of work without rules and its symbol the subcontracting system. This essential and crucial coil of the problems and demands in the zone are the main point where the shipbuilding workers and Limter-Is met. But of course, comprehending the main coil of the problems and demands in the right way also coincided with the struggle line of Limter-Is, which is a constant, determined and self-sacrificing line that gives reliance to workers. Can we talk about the vanguard course of action without developing a solution line that comprehends and responds to the most urgent problems in the zone and the most vital demands of the shipbuilding workers?

We especially want to emphasize the following point: The question of link and linking up with the working masses contains first of all an organic characteristic that finds its expression/concretises in the wish and ambition of understanding the problems and demands (in the right way!), defending vital demands in an unshakable and solution-finding way and achieving these demands, and as a result, in the determination for struggle. To understand the question of link and linking up not as an organic contact/relation but as a physical one means to put the cart before the horse.

While with the work of the Observation and Investigation Commission for the Tuzla Shipyards Zone the essential problems and demands became more concrete, in the recent process Limter-Is has managed to totally focus all its power and energy on the essential problems and demands.

Defining the main coil in the right way and holding it tightly have been one of the main conditions that prepared the success which brought together the shipbuilding workers and their vanguard union .

### **Binding all forms to the preparation of the strategic means**

The zone-wide strike on February 27-28 is the highest level the struggle at Tuzla zone has reached since the 1990s. As the *union-related vanguard power*, Limter-Is carried out its activities with the foresight that a zone-wide strike would be the solution to ameliorate the heavy and brutal working conditions in the zone as well as putting an end to the unorganised situation of the workers that results from the unregulated working conditions and the subcontracting system. The strike on February 27-28 as the strategic

means of the period did not appear at once or happened "spontaneously. In fact it was prepared also by making some kind of rehearsals many times before. The strike was prepared with foresight and will, with methodical and systematic efforts that complete each other. At this point, of dozens of examples it will be enough to remind of the semi-strikes<sup>[7]</sup> and demonstrations of thousands of workers in 2000 and 2005 against the work-related accidents, the strike at Yonca shipyard<sup>[8]</sup>, numerous resistances organised for getting wages that had not been paid and the Desan resistance<sup>[9]</sup> that among all of these actions sowed resistance seeds in the zone.

The class struggle is a whole. One of the main aspects or characteristics of the line developed by the revolutionary vanguard at Tuzla shipyards was the perspective that the political mass agitation and organisational activities at the living spaces of the shipbuilding workers and the work carried out by the *union-related vanguard* at the shipyards would complete and feed each other. This approach needs to be noted particularly among the conditions that prepared the success.

There is no doubt that the *union-related vanguard power* has fought for making the cut on the level of the whole sector<sup>[10]</sup>, organising itself in every single shipyard and achieving legal authorisation. And it even made the cut in the zone and has achieved legal authorisation in many shipyards. However, based also on the power it got from the collaborating yellow unionism, the shipyards' bosses and their organisation GISBIR appeared as *united capitalists* in front of Limter-Is and the workers in the shipyards where legal authorisation had been achieved. It became more urgent and even more possible that this situation, which reflects that capitalists have a higher class consciousness and are more united than workers, must be overcome through a leap forward in the workers' class consciousness, class unity and struggle.

The activities and struggles carried out by Limter-Is have shown that the zone-wide struggle and the struggle in every single shipyard forms a whole, that they complete each other, that the zone-wide struggle opens the way for the struggles in each shipyard and the struggles in each shipyard is the lever of the zone-wide struggle.

We have described Limter-Is's course of struggle that lead to success with its vanguard characteristic. However, Limter-Is has never restricted itself by *vanguard actions* or only by the action of the *vanguard union*. While it carried out continuously enlighten-

The vanguard course of action has combined the agitation, propaganda and organisation actions that are realised directly by the vanguard with the workers' mass struggle that are inflamed and organised by the vanguard.

ment and organisation work in order to make the cut on the level of the whole sector and achieve authorisation on the level of each workplace, it never hesitated to organise workers' mass actions whenever there were appropriate conditions and opportunities. It used its vanguard power not only for enlightening the shipbuilding workers, organising them and making them members of the union, but at the same time for developing the class struggle as a direct and open mass struggle of the workers. Thousands of workers joined the street blockades many times, they organised demonstrations and actions and these were the forms of the united class struggle in the zone.

7- In these actions, workers stopped the work for a few hours without officially declaring a strike, due to the bans and attacks of the state.

8- On April 26, 2002, the shipbuilding workers started a strike at Yonca shipyard because of the dismissal of the workers who were affiliated to the union Limter-Is. They demanded that the dismissals should be cancelled and the bosses should accept to confer with the union. This was the first strike of the shipbuilding workers in Turkey after 24 years. The strike continued under the heavy attacks of the state and the representatives of the union were arrested several times.

9- In May 2006, 55 workers of the Desan shipyard started a strike demanding the payment of their salaries that were not paid since 1,5 month. This strike has been an example for the whole zone, and especially with the imprisonment of two leaders of the union Limter-Is, among them the general president Cem Dinc, the voice of the shipbuilding workers was heard by the whole society.

10- In order to have authorisation in one single workplace, a union has to pass the quota of 50% across the sector.

The vanguard course of action has combined the agitation, propaganda and organisation actions that are realised directly by the vanguard with the workers' mass struggle that are inflamed and organised by the vanguard. The vanguard course of action of the union-related vanguard power is not an aim for itself and could not be so. The course of action of the vanguard power is closely connected with the profits of the working class in the zone in whose name it is acting, with the necessities of developing the class consciousness, class organisation and class struggle of the working class in the zone.



While Limter-Is prepared the *de facto* legitimate mass movements through its *vanguard actions* realised together with advanced and vanguard workers and through its vanguard course of struggle on the basis of the class' most essential profits and demands, in some situations it managed to reach the level of direct workers' mass struggles.

Especially in the last two years Limter-Is has managed to unite the *de facto* legitimate mass struggle, the vanguard actions and the "bureaucratic" and *diplomatic* methods of struggle in an active and energetic form. Especially together with the report of the Observation and Investigation Commission for the Tuzla Shipyards Zone and the march of Limter-Is to Ankara, the reality of the Tuzla zone, the paradise of exploitation created through the subcontracting system and the working conditions without insurance and rules, turning the workers' blood and life into capital, has been put on the agenda of the TBMM

(Grand National Assembly of Turkey); and this has been an important lever of the preparation of the strike in the sense of enlightening the society, explaining the justness of the struggle, creating public support and social legitimacy. Likewise, the diplomatic relation that Limter-Is established with the Minister of Labour and Social Security has shown its power to represent the workers and defend their demands at every level and has strengthened its legitimacy and power of representation in the eyes of the workers.

One of the main conditions that prepared the success of the strike was the combative tendency DISK had adopted recently. DISK and the affiliated trade unions mobilised for and participated actively in the struggle of Limter-Is and the shipbuilding workers; KESK went into action; struggling union branches affiliated to Turk-Is and among them first of all the Tuzla branch of Deri-Is (leather workers' trade union), the general centres of Hava-Is (Trade Union of Civil Aeronautics of Turkey) and Deri-Is, progressive political parties, platforms, various associations, intellectuals and artists mobilised for the zone-wide strike at Tuzla and contributed to it. The forces for labour and freedom showed the talent to mobilise on February 27-28 and unite their forces, by that they made an important contribution to the success of the shipyards' strike. They gave the shipyard workers the power to pass an important stage in the class struggle. Therefore, the struggle of Limter-Is and the shipyard workers of Tuzla has appeared as a laboratory of the class struggle and class unionism against the policies of neoliberal attack of the capital.

### **Understanding the new situation, consolidating the achievements**

An important stage has been achieved in the great class struggle that has significance also from the point of view of the working class' and trade union movement's history of struggle and that tested and concretised the line of revolutionary class unionism against the international capital's policies of neoliberal attack. All the *constructors of the process* that put their efforts to this struggle, including those who have led the movement, and all friends and allies who supported it in different forms and showed solidarity deserve to be exposed to the reality and feeling of *having achieved* and *having won*. Drinking from the wine of victory thirstily but without languor, they must prepare themselves for greater struggles and greater victories by accumulating power, energy and self-confidence.

Together with this, it is necessary to live with the consciousness and feeling that in every important stage of the class struggle, in every moment of success and afterwards, the most important problem of this "moment" is "not to slack off", "not to get stuck in the first flush of victory" and "not to crow over". Slacking off in such a moment, being spoilt, and crowing over can destroy everything. First of all for these reasons, it is now time to hold firm in the shipyards zone.

The success of the strike in the Tuzla shipyards zone is a very important achievement. These achievements must be turned into class consciousness by being analysed, defined and discussed; and must be digested in the intellectual and psychological sense. It is a part of the urgent tasks to concretise and enrich the understanding/idea of revolutionary class unionism on the basis of the experiences, lessons and results that could be drawn from the this struggle that has been continuing for many years, the processes that it passed and the preparation of this recent increase and peak of the struggle and on the basis of turning all these into class consciousness. This is also important for the reason that it is also the soil/the ground, which the march forward that is to be continued uninterruptedly will also base on; it is a necessity of the struggle. The urgency and essential importance of analysing the new situation created with the victory of the zone-wide strike as well as building up perspectives and politics of how to move on from this point must be clear for everyone.

The victory of the zone-wide strike itself is a very important achievement. Moreover, it is a fact that with the zone-wide strike the demand of labour safety and unionisation have been imposed on the organisation of the shipyards' bosses GISBIR and opened the way for the achievement of these rights. A new situation has appeared. With the zone-wide strike, Limter-Is has achieved authorisation from the shipbuilding workers. It is the duty of the vanguard union to digest the consciousness, responsibility and the feeling of the reality that it is their legitimate and legal (yes legal, legalised by the strike!) representative and to reflect this in the behaviour and course of action. The vanguard union has proofed its capability and power with the zone-wide strike, it has achieved authorisation from the shipbuilding workers and thus reached the level of being the union leading them. By that, the vanguard course of action has mainly completed its duty. Using this course of action will again be necessary from time to time; but now the line and course of action must turn into the direction of the workers' mass participation/movement in the trade

union struggle; into the course of mass class struggle. The change of its course of action and the leadership means its re-construction.

Consolidating the achievements and the current situation is the main problem and duty that must be completed at the moment. This means that the line followed until now must be continued to be followed with persistence. For that, it must be figured out and concretised what is needed for consolidating the achievements. As the strike in the Tuzla shipyards zone opened the way by declaring Limter-Is as the legitimate authorised union, consolidating the achievements will mean first of all to walk this way.

With the zone-wide strike the demand of labour safety and unionisation have been imposed on the organisation of the shipyards' bosses GISBIR and opened the way for the achievement of these rights. Limter-Is has achieved authorisation from the shipbuilding workers.

Consolidating the achievements means to organise every single shipyard, conquer each of them and -as DISK general president Suleyman Celebi said- "to raise the flag of DISK/Limter-Is at all shipyards". Therefore, a broad organisation campaign is essential. This organisation campaign must be carried out separately in every single shipyard. The leadership performed by the union will be able to carry out successfully such an organisation campaign only if it unites with advanced/vanguard workers, educates them as cadres, and makes them join the leadership activity of the union. The integrity of the struggle and organisation of the union in every single shipyard and the struggle and organisation throughout the zone; the integrity of the united organisation-united struggle must be maintained. In this sense, it may be right for the union to found a kind of organisation such as a workers' assembly (or council etc.) of the zone which can be joined by vanguard workers from all shipyards – or an assembly of the representatives of workplaces in the zone participated by the representatives of the union in each workplace.



What we must especially emphasize is that the success of every work and organisation campaign is linked with and dependent on educating new cadres. The mobilisation to organise the union in every single shipyard must be combined with an immediate mobilisation for educating new cadres. Every work and mobilisation for educating cadres must cover an ideological transformation and a reconstruction on the ideological basis. The work for ideological transformation must at first cover a program that gives vanguard, advanced workers the minimum basic class consciousness which will let them carry out trade union work functionally. It is essential to avoid doctrinarism and schematism, to trust in the workers/working class and to carry out an uninterrupted work in order to arm them ideologically with the line of class unionism and to educate them as cadres. The vanguard should not avoid the mobilisation of forces which is necessary for this work.

For consolidating the achievements, the continuous struggle for achieving the essential demands which are also defended by the public, being the owner and observer of the union, informing the workers and ensuring the participation of the workers are necessary. Mass struggle and diplomacy and "bureaucratic" forms of struggle must complete each other. The dialogue-negotiations etc with GIS-BIR must be continued, while the fight continues with the determination to achieve the demands, there should be no hesitation to produce practical solutions that meet with the workers' profits and demands, even from making reconciliations and agreements. Reconciliations, agreements etc. have become one dimension of the trade union struggle. What is important is that the reconciliation and agreement made under each given situ-

ation and conditions of the relations of powers etc. must finish with achievements that are appropriate to the working class' profits. For urgent demands such as the amelioration of the working conditions throughout the zone, measures for labour safety etc., the struggle must be led in every single shipyard, too.

The shipyard bosses and their class organisation GIS-BIR have been in trouble since the neoliberal hell of Tuzla has been exposed by the political general strike in the zone. What will they do now? How will they continue with their class struggle? What will GISBIR that under the conditions of the zone-wide strike had to sit at the table with Limter-Is, now do? This is a situation which can be more or less predicted. Now GISBIR will try to detain and calm down the workers, will wait until the interest and the sensitivity of the public reduces. In the meantime, it can try to give the impression that the problems are being solved. It must be foreseen and expected that the shipyard bosses and GISBIR will fight for every single shipyard in order to hinder the organisation of Limter-Is and cover up the fact that Limter-Is is the authorised union. It will also be no surprise if workers would be sacked in masses or black lists prepared. There is no doubt that the shipyard bosses and its class organisation GISBIR will not hesitate to use their yellow union weapon in an influential way. It is a situation to be expected that the yellow collaborating unionism that played its role in a passive way in the past will have an active role reactivated by the bosses.

This means that the struggle has reached a level more complex and complicated. It requires a clearer openness, a more concrete perspective, a higher talent of strategy and tactics, determination as well as capability of manoeuvres.

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## THE REALITY OF THE KURDISH STATE \*

*The “nightmare” of the representatives of the oppressing nation revealed in Turkish colonialism is the “dream” of the representatives of the oppressed nation manifested in the formation of a Kurdish state. They had established and fortified their present colonialist nation-state by violating the right of the Kurdish nation to establish their own state and by suppressing it; they had drawn the borders of their country by occupying and annexing the borders of another country. Now the formation of a Kurdish nation-state destroys the Turkish official ideology and puts the borders of the Turkish nation-state in discussion. A burgeoning plant that was smashed under the boots of soldiers for a century is now growing up; getting taller than the boots and grows towards the trunk of colonialism.*

At the beginning of 1990s when the national liberation struggle reached its peak, the official ideology entered a process of disintegration. As much as the freedom fire of Kaveh<sup>[1]</sup> brightened the countryside and cities of Kurdistan, it began petrifying the ruling classes. This took such an extent that after some time many state authorities from the prime minister to the president had to announce that they recognise the “Kurdish reality”.<sup>[2]</sup> Even though they continued the policy of annihilation, the chain of denial was de facto broken.<sup>[3]</sup>

Entering the 21<sup>th</sup> century, the ‘phenomenon term’ was this time the “Ocalan reality”. Acceptance of the national existence of the Kurds would only affirm in recognising their captured national leader and in accepting him as the representative of the Kurdish nation. However, the ruling classes and colonialist fascism have never considered and accepted Abdullah Ocalan as the national leader of the Kurdish

people. In this new situation, the denial took the form of the policy implemented on Ocalan, but this time, they were not able to implement the policy of annihilation and had to abolish the death sentence.

At the end of the present decade, the specific situation the Kurdish national struggle created in the region shows that the new phenomenon is the “formation of a Kurdish state”. This can be called “the reality of the Kurdish state”. Just as it had implemented an aggressive policy in face of the Kurdish reality and Ocalan reality before, the colonialist fascist Turkish state still follows the same policy of denial and annihilation; moreover, it is even more intolerant and follows a more aggressive policy. Notably, first of all the army, and then all administrative centres and complementary institutions of colonialist fascism insult the Kurdish people using Mesut Barzani and Celal Talabani. The dirty war barons, who once called Ocalan a “murderer of babies”, vomit their chauvin-

1- Kaveh the blacksmith is a Kurdish national mythical figure. It is believed that he has defeated the brutal ruler Zahhak.

2- The first time that the Turkish ruling forces admitted this reality was in 1991, when the Kurdish national struggle led by the PKK had reached the level of a national revolution, with the guerrilla war in the mountains and the huge uprisings in the cities. Suleyman Demirel, the Prime Minister of that period had said: “We accept the Kurdish reality”. Until that time, even the existence of the Kurds was completely denied.

3- “Denial and annihilation policy” is the traditional policy of Turkish colonialism that absolutely denies the existence of the Kurdish nation and claims that the Kurds are in fact Turkish people living in the mountains. That is to say, they deny the existence of the Kurds and annihilate every idea of Kurds being a nation.





ism by naming Barzani a 'clan leader' or a 'tribal chief'. The colonialist fascist dictatorship far from accepting the formation of a Kurdish state announced that they expand the war front from the North to the South without forgetting to talk profusely about their intentions to fight against the whole world, if necessary. They go as far as talking about expanding the borders to Duhok.

For them Barzani is as much a target as Apo<sup>[4]</sup> has been and Kirkuk is as much a place of threat as Mount Quandil.<sup>[5]</sup> They strengthen their politics on the following basis: hindering the formation and development of the Kurdistan Regional Government, grabbing a part in the regional redistribution that has begun to materialize with the Greater Middle East Project of the US imperialism and not remaining inactive in the "war on borders" centralized in the Middle East, which will become even sharper in the upcoming period.

The Turkish state has realized that some developments will take place in the Middle East, the details are not clear at the moment but they are closely linked to it. It is aware that a new stage of the period is coming up; it has sensed all this, and for this reason, it has mobilised in Turkey and Kurdistan all apparatus corresponding to this, such as the MIT (National Intelligence Organization), JIT (Gendarmerie Intelligence Organisation) and TIT (Turkish Revenge Brigade). No matter how the name begins, all have an "IT" as ending<sup>[6]</sup>. The state practices military diplomacy. On October 29<sup>[7]</sup>, the army joins the ceremonies with "swords". It organises these celebrations of the foundation of the Republic on the basis of psychological war and carries them "beyond the borders" so that celebrations take place in the embassies in Washington and Moscow, too. While welcoming the Iraqi state's delegation at the airport,

4- The short name of Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the PKK.

5- The commandship of the PKK is located on the Mount Quandil.

6- Here the writer plays on words because "IT" means dog in Turkish and is used for swearing. Especially the fascists are called "it".

7- October 29, 1923 is the date of foundation of the Turkish Republic, following the Liberation War 1919-1923. It is celebrated as a national feast.

the state applies a protocol on the level of the General Directorate of the Police and not of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Prime Minister. It organises the transport through the replacement vehicle of the National Chief of the Police and hosts the delegation at the hostel belonging to the police organisation. With these most banal details of the military diplomacy, the Turkish state displays a show of power and assertiveness. Look at these brazenfaced representatives of colonialism that calls the KKTC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) its "foster-son", which is not recognized by any state in the world; look how they treat the representatives and the allies of the Kurdish nation.

Nevertheless, the conditions have changed a lot when compared with the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. The process of the formation of a Kurdish state has started and still continues. Kucukanit<sup>[8]</sup>, (a fly is small, too, but makes you feel nauseous, too), the chief of the general staff of those who could not accept this fact and call Barzani "a tribal chief" had admitted the existence of "the reality" during the first days of his employment. He had admitted that a Kurdish political power, had started to come into being despite of them on the piece of land that used to be a blank defined as the "36<sup>th</sup> parallel"<sup>[9]</sup> in the past. Now the Turkish state does everything to oppress the PKK on the one hand and tries to make US imperialism as well as Barzani and Talabani to respect its own scene and especially to advance its power of bargaining with US imperialism on the other hand by using the PKK as pretext. The Turkish state knows that the big picture will soon become the BOP ("Greater Middle East Project") and that although this picture has not been completed yet, it advances towards a period where it will be completed. There is no doubt that this is a process; or rather it is a new stage within the process that started with the occupation of Iraq. It cannot be seen as a short period, there will be breaking points, too. But this new stage of the process is very important for the Turkish state and in the same way for the Kurdish people. Any opportunity and any initiative missed at this stage

may have a dramatic outcome for the sides. For this reason, each political actor tries to handle the situation gingerly.

US imperialism has started to draw the Iraqi part of the scene, in parallel to this some colours of Kurdistan have come out, too; however, there is still uncertainty about some parts of Kurdistan and Palestine. The relations between the USA and Iran and with Syria still have elements of uncertainty, and currently they draw attention and are being observed and followed with interest by other actors, such as Russia. The fascist colonialism is calculating that US

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imperialism and Israeli Zionism will need its support in this sense. As all actors, the Turkish state wants to join the Greater Middle East Project scene with its own colours. This scene is being drawn with blue for petrol, red for blood and green for \$, the main colour, of course, being red which stands for blood. The Turkish state wants to get as much right to speak and share as possible.

And it is also clear that US imperialism needs the support of Barzani and Talabani forces as much as it

8- Here again, the writer play on words, changing the surname of Yasar Buyukanit, chief of the general staff in that period. "Buyukanit" begins with "buyuk" which means "big" in Turkish. The writer changes it into "kucuk" which means "small" to humiliate him.

9- In 1991, with the demand of the USA, a "security zone" was formed in the north of Iraq (which is actually Southern Kurdistan) as a measure taken against Saddam Hussein. The 36th parallel was the border of this zone. The Turkish state opened its bases and all facilities to the US military forces located in that zone. Within the same context, it established relations with Barzani and Talabani according to the demands of the USA USA and also with the aim of collaborating with these two Kurdish leaders against the PKK.



needs Turkey, and while maintaining and continuing its relations with the Turkish state, it cannot risk destroying the balance in Southern Kurdistan. US imperialism cannot destroy at the moment the new equation it had created with the occupation of Iraq because besides not being appropriate to the strategy for the Middle East, it will also be very difficult for it to stay in the region and make big steps under conditions where it attracts the cumulative reaction of the Arabs and Kurds. Having been stuck between the formation of a Kurdish nation-state and the interests of the Turkish colonialist forces, US imperialism keeps a foot in both camps and creates tension and disagreement, especially for Turkish colonialism. It is inevitable that the equation in the Middle East will be shaped by including new elements. Will the equation be simplified or will it get more complicated? This will be determined by course of today's heavy traffic which is manifested in the negotiations among the states and in the regional meetings, as well as by the will of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist people's movements, those of the Kurdish, Palestinian, Persian and Iraqi peoples first of all.

The dynamics of this new stage of the period is the fact that the political power of the Kurdish nation has been advancing towards the formation of a state that has started to burgeon in Southern Kurdistan. The Turkish state suffers the pain of this on the one hand and this political drama grows its eagerness on the

other hand. It tries to present itself as the victim of the process with the allegations of "PKK terror" and it plays all the possible cards from social mobilisation to military mobilisation, from diplomatic attack to economic embargo. However, it also tries to create a base to participate in the plunder of the Middle East and is willing to grab a piece of the pie by playing a role of a victim.

The first obstacle in front of it is Barzani. He is the one for whom the state targets. Coming from an experience of national liberation and organisation, becoming stronger as the national representative of the Southern Kurdistan people, having strengthened his position on the basis of collaboration with a determining political actor, such as the US imperialism, Barzani speaks very clearly with the Turkish state: "When you make a peaceful political proposal to the PKK and it refuses it, then the PKK will be considered as a terrorist organisation by us". This means, the PKK is not a terrorist organisation; it is a political force to meet with! This attitude makes Turkish colonialism crazy. They loose their temper because they do not hear in this voice the sound of a singing partridge as in the case of Talabani, even though Talabani said that "he will not turn over even a cat to the Turkish state" and this seemed to be a challenge. But there arouse suspicions that these words could be an expression of some dirty tricks behind the scenes. As they are not able to see in the attitude of



Barzani the agility of 'Mam Cemal'<sup>[10]</sup> who has become famous for his opportunism, they speak from the mouth of the mafia. The fact that the conditions are not convenient any more to provoke different political actors of the Kurdish nation against each other makes them loose their temper.

They force the situation despite all: they hope that the US collaborator Barzani and collaborator and opportunist Talabani would support the Turkish state against the PKK as they have in the past. And while pushing for this, they see a Kurdistan which acts in national unity in front of them. The picture really reminds of a static warfare. The more Turkish colonialism extends the front of dirty war from the North towards the South, the more it faces a Kurdish national front whose parts<sup>[11]</sup> are almost united. The people of the South announce that they will resist the occupation and fight against it. They move the three fourth of their military force to the border. In the big cities, they organise demonstrations with the participation of hundreds of thousands of people. They announce that they will not turn over the PKK fighters to Turkish colonialism. The posture of the Southern Kurds was not like this during the previous cross-border attacks, because they did not have a state at that time!

The path of the Kurdish nation with a state policy in front of the Turkish state and the tendency of the Southern Kurdistan to embrace the sons and daughters of Northern Kurdistan and to identify its own destiny with that of Northern Kurdistan are from now on inevitable.

The differences among the PKK and the YNK and PDK<sup>[12]</sup> do not change this truth. It is a reality that the people of the North and the South have identified with each other and this is what we call national destiny. The fact that the Northern and the Southern parts of the Kurdish land that has been divided into four have come closer to each other and they have achieved the unity of feelings and spirit against the colonialist aggression is a new situation which is at the same time a natural result of the reality of the Kurdish state.

The reality of the Kurdish state must be registered as a new phenomenon also in historical sense. The situ-

ation is remarkable because a new nation-state has been constructing itself under the conditions where it is claimed that the process of nation-states has been eroded and surpassed in the 21st century. It would be wrong both in terms of politics and in terms of historical dialectics to say, departing from the fact that Barzani and Talabani collaborate with the US imperialism, that this process of becoming a nation-state is not legitimate. The right of nations to self-determination is universal and the Kurdish nation uses this right in practice in this way in the South. Undoubtedly, this has been a late process of becoming a state when compared with classical examples of becoming a

The fascist colonialism is calculating that US imperialism and Israeli Zionism will need its support. As all actors, the Turkish state wants to join the Greater Middle East Project scene with its own colours. This scene is being drawn with blue for petrol, red for blood and green for \$, the main colour, of course, being red which stands for blood.

state; it is distinctive and the reason for this is the fact that imperialism and colonialism has suppressed, hindered and repressed with terror the Kurdish nation's right of organisation like other nations around the struggle for establishing its state and around its national identity. Consequently, especially Turkish colonialism still wants to overwhelm and to hinder the process of the Kurdish nation becoming a state. This is understandable, because the process of construction of the Turkish state has been realised at the cost of the denial and annihilation of other nations and nationalities.

10- Mam Cemal ("Uncle Jamal" in Kurdish) is Jamal Talabani.

11- The land of Kurdistan is divided into four parts. Northern Kurdistan is under the colonialist yoke of Turkey. Southern part is in Iraq. The other parts are under the colonialist yoke of Iran and Syria.

12- YNK and PDK are the organisations led by Talabani and Barzani,

Turkish militarism has been shaped within the tradition of oppressing other national movements and identities starting from the Committee of Union and Progress (Ittihat ve Terakki<sup>[13]</sup>) which it has been based on and since the Balkan wars. The Balkan wars were a clash between the forces that had waged a war of national independence against the Ottoman Empire and the forces that would later form the nucleus of Turkish militarism and colonialism. It is known which policies the political power of the ruling classes has implemented massively and systematically on Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, Yazidi and other nationalities and national minorities before, during and after the establishment of the Republic. So the "static warfare" between Turkish colonialism and the Kurdish national forces today can be also defined as the clash of a new nation-state that is being established and another nation-state that was established in the beginning of the century and now faces the fear of dissolution. The "nightmare" of the representatives of the oppressing nation revealed in Turkish colonialism is the "dream" of the representatives of the oppressed nation manifested in the formation of a Kurdish state. It is so because they had established and fortified their present colonialist nation-state by violating the right of the Kurdish nation to establish their own state and by suppressing it; they had drawn the borders of their country by occupying and annexing the borders of another country. It is so because they know that what they call Misak-i Milli<sup>[14]</sup> is a historical injustice. It is so because this policy has

kicked the ruling forces back; now the formation of a Kurdish nation-state destroys the Turkish official ideology and puts the borders of the Turkish nation-state in discussion. It is so because the reality of Kurdish nation-state is, yes, a dream for the Kurds and a nightmare for Turkish colonialism. And this is becoming a reality now. A burgeoning plant that was smashed under the boots of soldiers for a century is now growing up; getting taller than the boots and grows towards the trunk of colonialism; hurts its eyes.

The task and the responsibility of any revolutionary who fights against chauvinism and militarism, stands away from social chauvinism and believes in the importance of the right of nations to self-determination to the concrete situation under every given real condition is to call upon and force the colonialist fascist dictatorship to recognise the Kurdistan Regional Government and accept its national political representatives. The pressure put on the Turkish state and forcing it in this context is a necessity for exposing the chauvinist and unabashed approach of the colonialist fascist front and to put it in vain in relation with the strength and amount of the political pressure. Moreover, it is especially meaningful and necessary for enlightening the Turkish people about the fact that they are the real force to deal with the 'Kurdish question', for informing the Turkish labourers correctly and for keeping them away from the poisoning rage of chauvinism.

13- Ittihat ve Terakki (Committee of Union and Progress) is a political organisation of the newborn bourgeoisie during the dissolution period of the Ottoman Empire.

14- Misak-i Milli (National Oath) is the set of six important decisions made during the last period of the Ottoman Empire. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, leader of the bourgeoisie in the foundation process of the Turkish Republic and the first president, adopted as a program the decisions of Misak-i Milli, which also includes the present borders of the Turkish Republic, with Northern Kurdistan colonised by this state.

***\*This article has been taken from the revolutionary socialist weekly newspaper Atilim dated November 3, 2007. It evaluates the developments in South Kurdistan from the revolutionary point of view, makes some new definitions and stresses the tasks of the revolutionary forces concerning the new situation.***

# REALITY, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

*In many areas of the class struggle the need for international solidarity and coordination has been understood already and initiatives corresponding to that have been developed. However, in the sphere of women's work we are still in our infancy meanwhile the bourgeois and petite-bourgeois women obtained at least a certain level of international communication and networking. Today more than ever, in the face of recent weakness of the communist women's work, international contacts and exchanges are important, in order to learn from each other, to exchange experiences and to strengthen the struggles of the labouring women in different countries.*

## Birth of the women's movement

The oppression of women, which shows itself in all social spheres of life, began with the transition from collective property to private property, the abolition of the matriarchy and the division of the society into classes.

We can be sure that there has been resistance of women against their position as oppressed gender from the beginning on, however except for legends and single examples of women, unfortunately very little is known about these times.

The organized women's movement began with the bourgeois French revolution at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For the first time, the demand for full social equality was voiced. The ground for that had been created by the capitalist mode of production, which was the driving force behind the striving for equality, in order to be able to exploit men as well as women without any obstacle. The bourgeois women's movement never questioned the reason of the oppression of women, the existence of the private property, but it did play a progressive role in history and obtained several achievements as women's suffrage, equal rights, legal protection of working mothers etc.

The first and only women's movement, which really aims at the liberation of women from exploitation and oppression, is the proletarian women's movement, because it considers the women's issue as social

issue and links the struggles of the labouring women with those of the whole working class. It fights not only for a formal, legal equality within the existing order, but on the contrary for the economic and social equality of women and the abolition of the roots of the oppression of women, the private property.



The proletarian women's movement began to develop in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially under the leadership of communist women like Clara Zetkin it won force and importance. Also the role of the I. International, founded by Marx and Engels, was of a big importance for the comprehension of the need to integrate women just as men into the class struggle and to organize them. In 1910, the II. International has introduced the International Labouring Women's Day, following an initiative of Clara Zetkin, in memory of the resistance of the female workers in New York on March 8, 1857, which is still celebrated militantly in many countries even today.

Since the women's issue cannot be solved within the capitalist system, the bourgeois women's movement necessarily comes up more and more against its limiting factors in the imperialist countries.

#### **Feminism and bourgeois women's movement**

Today, different trends exist within the international women's movement and feminism is by a long way the strongest one among them. Generally speaking, feminism is the view to consider not the classes, but the genders as the main contradiction. According to this, feminism does not make a difference between bourgeois and proletarian women but only between men and women. This opinion includes the class conciliation and diverts the attention from the origin of the problems, the private property.

Until today, feminism did not draw up a project leading to the liberation of women and it is also not able to do so. Feminism does not claim to liberate whole humanity anyway, but as it is trying to bring together women belonging to different classes, in a class society it necessarily is confronted with contradictions between the different class interests and in fact cannot really bring about a fundamental change.

Of course there are many different trends of feminism between which we have to differentiate. After the first wave of the bourgeois women's movement

had obtained achievements like the right to vote and the eligibility to stand for election and legal equality, the main part of it turned into liberal-feminist trends, which are also supported by the bourgeois states. This was followed after the World War II, especially in the 1960s and 70s, by the second wave of the bourgeois women's movement, whose class composition was in contrast to the first one mainly petite-bourgeois. Within this movement, which developed particularly in Europe, many different trends arose, among them the so-called radical feminism, which parts from the equality in principle (universalism) of the genders and explains the existing differences between the genders mainly by the social balances of power and the socialization of the people. Another big trend of feminism in these years was the socialist feminism, which does accept the relation of private property with the women's issue but puts the contradiction between the genders over the class contradiction and thus misjudges the nature of the attitude of Marxism to the women's issue. Socialist feminism holds the negative attitude of the revisionist parties in the women's issue against Marxism.

After the fast ascent of radical feminism in the 70s, it degenerated in the 80s to the "postmodern feminism" and splitted into various trends. One trend among these is the deconstructivist feminism, which, as also many other trends, bases on the existentialist feminism of Beauvoir and even goes a step ahead by saying, that the biological gender as well as the social gender are social constructs and therefore gender has to be rejected as unit of classification. The difference between human beings stands in the centre of this theory that means that adopted common grounds /gender identities are "dissolved/deconstructed". Instead of that, it parts from the idea that there are as many identities as human beings existing.

These bourgeois views of the women's issue are very popular especially in the imperialist countries; we can see them frequently at Social forums, in forms of different NGOs, in the framework of the so-called anti-globalization movement and in women's projects directly financed by the governments. Like all post-modern theories, also the post-modern and liberal feminist theories have lost any progressive character today and serve only the division of the working class in religion, nature and, as it is the case here, gender.

Since the women's issue cannot be solved within the capitalist system, the bourgeois women's movement necessarily comes up more and more against its limiting factors in the imperialist countries and its

demands are oriented more on career chances and leading positions and do not have a lot in common with the problems of the labouring women. For the same reason, problems corresponding to the women's issues like oppression, violence, rape etc. of course are continuing to exist everywhere and for all women – even though to a different extent.

The imperialist bourgeoisie tries hard to win the women and tries to organize them according to their interests. One important means for that is numerous trends of the bourgeois women's movement.

### Feminism in the democratic women's movement

Feminism is also widespread in the democratic women's movement.

In those countries, where the democratic, anti-imperialist revolution is on the agenda, and the petite-bourgeoisie can historically still play a revolutionary role, the labouring women's movement, consisting of the women from the working class and its allies, is composed differently and movements with feminist character, whose social base is petite-bourgeois women, do have a progressive character.

One current example how feminism manifests itself within the democratic women's movement is the Kurdish women's movement, which is a part of the national Kurdish movement.

From the second half of the 90s on, some feminist influences existed in the approach of the PKK on the women's issue, however, essentially after the extradition of the leader of the PKK Ocalan to Turkey as a result of an international complot, together with the change of the line realized together with the Imrali defense following that and the PKK sliding from a petite-bourgeois revolutionary line to a petite-bourgeois reformist line, feminism became an evident tendency.

The content of the Imrali defense essentially is a renunciation of national independence, a rejection of Marxism; however these changes are theoretically justified and fed with feminism. In his book titled "From the Sumerian Priest State to the Democratic Republic", Ocalan accounts in details for why "women are a class of its own".

The fundamental documents of PJA/PJAK (Women's Freedom Party/Kurdish Women Workers Party) include feminist theses like the one that women are an oppressed class. Neither in the "Women's Liberation Ideology", one of Ocalan's principal theses concerning the women's issue, nor in the program of PJAK the



position of women as oppressed gender is connected in any way to the existence of the private property. However a program, a strategy or principal tactic, which does not take into consideration the classes and class struggle, is not able to solve the women's issue or develop a liberation project by putting the woman into its centre. In the documents of PJA/PJAK, women are characterized as the "oldest and lowest class". Well, although it is true that women were the first ones, who have been oppressed, and, as Bebel said, the woman was the first slave of humanity, from that does not result that women, which are half of all humanity, are a class of its own.

PJA/PJAK follows the typical feminist approach to unite women from different classes under the banner of "sisterhood".

In spite of the fact, that the Kurdish women's movement has a clear feminist character today, it nevertheless is a progressive movement which led the women from the domestic prison of the feudal family bounds into the freedom of the armed struggle in the mountains. Today, there are only very few democratic women's movements, which are so deeply rooted among the labouring women and obtained so many concrete achievements as the Kurdish women's movement.

Likewise, in many colonized and dependent countries, the petite-bourgeois women's movements and





feminist trends or trends influenced by feminism are an important component of the democratic women's movement and they are important allies for the proletarian women within the democratic women's movement.

#### **Attacks of the imperialist globalisation and resistance of the labouring women**

In the context of the increasing internationalisation of production and trade, many attacks are carried out against the labouring people, among them privatisations, increasing of the informal sector, increasing transition to flexible working conditions and similar measures. In particular the labouring women are affected in high dimensions by these attacks because they are working mainly in part-time, outwork or precarious work conditions, where in many cases not the slightest rights are guaranteed and the lowest wages are paid. However, in spite of the very difficult conditions, also in this area there are struggles of the labouring women for their rights. One out of many examples is the women working in the informal sector in India. In India, many women, who are living in the villages or suburbs, are working cash in hand as servants or domestics in the city centres. They have to spend a big part of the low wages for the travel costs. With the intervention of a revolutionary organisation, those women started to organise around the demand of a cheap monthly ticket, thus a movement

was born, which obtained this demand. However, as the women are not officially registered and organized, this ticket was still not given to them, moreover, during the ticket controls they frequently suffer from sexual assaults. Thus, the consciousness of the need of being organised developed. Beginning with the concrete demand for the monthly ticket, a struggle was born, which concluded with the foundation of the trade-union "All Bengal Domestic Women's Helper Organisation" and through it the branch was recognized in some places as an official sector and the employment relationship gained an official character. Nowadays, this struggle continues with new demands as for instance for pensions. This example shows that by means of putting concrete demands it is possible even under hard conditions, to create a close relation with the labouring women and a movement, which obtains concrete achievements.

#### **The struggle of the labouring women for the right of housing**

Another example for the active role of the labouring women in the struggles against the neo-liberal politics is the struggle for the right of housing, which is highly topical from Brazil to Turkey. Women, whose life is limited within their four walls and who carry the whole responsibility for the household on their shoulders, are often the most active and militant part of the resistances for the right of housing. We would like to give one example of this from the struggle against house demolition in Ayazma, Istanbul. In the framework of the "Project for Urban Change" of the AKP government, the plan was to raze the whole quarter to the ground and give way to the projects of the big construction firms, but resistance stirred.

On the occasion of the preparatory work for March 8, the women of the Association of Labouring Women (EKD) started to work among the women of the quarter under danger of demolition. Given the fact that the majority of the women are illiterate, you couldn't get anywhere with leaflets. Instead of written materials, the activists from the EKD visited the women of Ayazma in their houses, had long conversations with them and tried hard to find a common language. Although the women participated actively in the protests and actions and often made the most militant proposals, they shrank from participating in the committee built and the discussion meetings against the demolition of the houses. Women have few experiences in social activities and they often limit themselves to house and family, the reactionary family structures and traditions make it more difficult to

speak freely in the presence of men and discuss their opinion. Besides, they are lacking in self-confidence. For all these reasons, special mechanisms are necessary in order to integrate women into the struggle. The women commission, which was built in Ayazma in the course of the militant struggle against the house demolition, was one of the most important and determined parts of the movement.

### Equal pay for equal work Danish women on strike

Many people think that in Europe equality of men and women is already achieved, but despite the fact, that laws guaranteeing formal equality are in force there, reality shows something else. First of all in the field of work it is obvious, that women do not have equal rights and are still discriminated. In the UK for instance, 30,000 women are dismissed every year because of being pregnant.

In Germany, the "law on equality of man and woman" came to force in July 1, 1958, but even today, women earn 24% less than men. In Denmark, equal pay was officially introduced in 1973 after a big struggle with 250,000 workers on strike. However, formal equal pay is still only a piece of paper, as the following example shows: Female workers in the health sector earn only 81 Danish kroner for every 100 the male workers are paid. This was one of the main reasons for more than

100,000 public sector workers, a big majority of them female workers, to go on strike in Denmark in spring 2008. The strike included kindergarden workers, nurses, healthcare assistants and other medical staff and was sparked off by the collective wage negotiations, as the right-wing government has imposed a 12.8% rise in pay, pensions and bonuses spread over the next three years, what actually would not even keep up with inflation. After many wildcat strikes during the last years in the public sector against privati-

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zation, the replacement of skilled personnel with unskilled labour, thriving of sub-contracting, very stressful working conditions and low wages, the protests culminated in the biggest strike ever in the public sector.

The Danish female workers also gained a massive support of the people, 80% of the population support the strikers' demand for a minimum 15% pay rise. Moreover, in the neighbouring Sweden thousands of health care workers walked off the job demanding higher wages, too.

After two month of struggle, nurses, midwives and laboratory assistants decided to go back to work after agreeing to a 13.3% pay hike over three years and the public employees, who work in nurseries and kindergartens, also announced an end to their four-week strike after accepting a 12.8 % raise.

The result of this strike may not be very successful concerning the pay hikes achieved, but undoubtedly it was a rich experience for the female Danish workers to be followed by many more struggles.

### Democratic women's movement and national liberation struggle: Northern Kurdistan

In Northern Kurdistan, where still many feudal elements are existing in the traditions and family relations, the production still contains semi-feudal remnants and women are exposed to a triple oppression because in addition to the class and gender oppression there is also the national one, a strong women's movement developed in connection with the national liberation struggle of the Kurdish people.

Together with the increasing spread of the guerilla warfare in the 90s, the national liberation struggle in Kurdistan also seized the women. Initially, women became active as mothers and wives, but later on women participated in all spheres, including the armed struggle. The active participation in the armed struggle was a first step for the Kurdish women in their search for freedom.

Although the leadership of the PKK supported the participation of women, in the beginning they were confronted with strong resistance also within the organisation itself. It happened frequently that women coming to the guerrilla were sent back from the current commander.

Although the leadership of the PKK supported the participation of women, in the beginning they were confronted with strong resistance also within the organisation itself. It happened frequently that women coming to the guerrilla were sent back from the current commander. Almost 300 cases of women are known, who came to the guerrilla, were not taken in and as a result of this fell into the hands of the enemy and were assassinated.

In 1992-93 discussions on building a special organisation of women within the guerrilla begun and after sharp internal arguments and with the great support of Ocalan, in the midst of the 90s, finally the women achieved to be accepted in the guerrilla, also by taking on the most heavy tasks, and in 1995, YAJK (Freedom Movement of Kurdish Women) was founded as the women's wing of the guerrilla. They started to

organise units consisting only of women and thus the process of the militarization of women started. This step was of high importance for the struggling women and strengthened their self-confidence, the solidarity and the organisation among women. The foundation of YAJK was a result of the needs of that time. So, the first Kurdish women organisation was born as a part of the guerrilla, in the democratic area there was no work among women worth mentioning at that time.

Today, the Kurdish women's movement has its own army structure, the YJA-STAR, the women party PAJK and the YJA, which is active in the area of democratic mass work. Furthermore, there are of course many more different organisations of the democratic Kurdish women's movement, as for instance the Mothers for Peace or the Women departments of the



DTP. In all organisations of the national Kurdish movement the rule of a proportion of a 33% of women is valid and really applied today. The Kurdish women's movement is today doubtlessly the most effective and massive force within the democratic women's movement in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan.

By means of the active participation in the national liberation struggle, the Kurdish women also started to rebel against their position as oppressed gender and are trying to change it. This way, in connection with the national liberation struggle of the Kurdish nation, an enormous democratic women's movement developed, which achieved gigantic radical changes in a society, where bride price, so called honour killings and a still strong feudal oppression of women are reality.

### Women are rebelling against reactionary structures in family and society: Nepal

Another illustration of the today's international women's movement, that contains many important and encouraging experiences, is the democratic revolution in Nepal.

In this country, were semi-feudal relations of production and a feudal political system predominated; the process of the democratic revolution under the leadership of the Communist Party Nepal (Maoist) has obtained important achievements. Doubtlessly, the Nepalese women have contributed a lot to that. Already in the beginning of the peoples war in February 1996, the women organised in the All Nepalese Women's Association (Revolutionary) have distinguished themselves by breaking the tense silence after the first historical strike in Nepal, which marked the beginning of the peoples war on February 13, by organising a seminar on the occasion of March 8, 1996 despite repression being highly probable, were they underlined the need for a comprehensive revolution for the liberation of women. It was the women from the lowest caste in the western district of Nepal Kalikot, who were the first ones, who snatched rifles from reactionary armed forces and handed them over to the CPN (M).

The CPN (M) understood the central role of women in the struggle for revolution in the right way and tried hard to create special means in order to integrate women into the struggle not only in the typical role as supporters or in the area of women's issues but also in leading positions. A special women department of the Central Committee (CC) was built, which has the task to develop politics for raising the potential of women to a higher level in order to integrate more women in policy-making organs in all three fronts: party, army, united front. Furthermore, there is the rule of a women proportion of 33% at all levels of the CPN (M), which really is applied. This policy already led to encouraging results, for instance at present, many women are in the CC of the CPN (M), dozens are working at regional level and hundreds at district level and several thousands at local and cell level of the party. In the Peoples Liberation Army many women are commander or vice-commander in the different brigades, platoons, squads and militias. There are separate women's sections in the brigade like women platoons, women squad teams, women militia teams functioning in the field. Regional women militias also participate actively together with peasants in people's courts, where informers, drunkards, gamblers, womanizers, and cheaters are punished.

In spite of many progresses concerning the activation of women in the revolutionary lines, there are still many problems, however in a country like Nepal, which still has heavy feudal marks, this should not be surprising. According to the words of Parwati from the leadership of the CPN (M), men are continuing to develop in the military field even when they have reached beyond 40 years of age, while women are hardly seen to continue in this field beyond 25 years. She states that one of the main reasons for this is the institution of marriage, which has robbed many of promising women leaders, because even within the party marriage and children are still a problem for the continuity of women's leadership. Actually many women complained that having a baby is like being under disciplinary penalty, because they are cut off from the Party activities for a long period.

Moreover, there is often a pressure on women's cadres to marry because unmarried women are causing a lot of mistrust among both men and women, and this fact leads to marriages against the wish of women or before they are ready for it. There is also a tendency to take sexual offenses more seriously than political offenses. Although these kind of backward traditions and behaviors still have a lot of influence, there are more and more women who are rebelling against these oppressing and politically wrong marriages. Widows dare more and more to marry again, which is condemned by the orthodox tradition of Hinduism. These examples are for sure important achievements of the Nepali revolutionaries but at the same time they show, how deeply the oppression of women is still rooted in the society and how much still have to be done in this area.



### Struggle against sexual violence under detention in Turkey

Sexual assault and violation are not only a general problem of which women as oppressed gender are affected by but also a method of torture applied in many countries systematically. In Turkey and Northern Kurdistan the fascist regime applied this kind of torture especially during the dirty war in the 90s in Kurdistan and in the prisons. In the society of Turkey and Northern Kurdistan, marked by Muslim and backward ideas of honour, it is also very difficult for the victims of violation to face these attacks because the family and the society is prejudiced in the traditional ideas of honour and often not take the side of the victim but distance from her. Therefore, the state aims with the torture of violation at isolating and making surrender the women. Fear, embarrassment, and social pressure make it impossible for many violated women to talk about it and charge the perpetrators.

In the end of the 90s, again and again revolutionary and communist women of different organisations have been violated by state forces and single resistances started to develop by making these crimes public. In this situation, the communist women within and without the prisons started to discuss the issue among them. As a result of these discussions a broad campaign against sexual assault and violation under detention was launched in the end of December 1999, which gained a lot of influence within a short period of time. The campaign has the aim to inform the public opinion, to charge those responsible, to organize juridical, psychological and social support for those affected by these attacks and to organize a broad participation in the trials opened against the violators and to make the problem known within the whole country and worldwide. In the framework of this campaign they paid a lot of importance to questioning the terms of honour and the social bourgeois-feudal ideas of values, as this seemed to be inevitable for a successful work. The campaign went on for more than 6 months and culminated in a conference "No to sexual assault and violation under detention", which took place from June 10-11, 2000 in Istanbul. The three main topics of the conference were 1) violation during war 2) violation under torture and 3) struggle against violation. At the conference some women talked for the first time in public about what they experienced and denounced those responsible. The conference gave not only immense courage and power to the delegates but turned into a source of resistance for the whole democratic women's movement. Breaking the taboo, denouncing the crimes in

public, questioning the backward ideas of honour and the strong solidarity with those affected not only strengthened the struggle against sexual assault and violation but also really intimidated the Turkish state. Due to this determinately carried out campaign this form of attack could be fought back to a great extent and cases of sexual assaults and violation under detention decreased noticeably.

### The labouring women's movement today is a colourful mosaic

Of course there are countless examples and experiences more of significant struggles and movements of the labouring women in different areas apart from those mentioned here. From the Columbian women



fighting in the rows of the FARC with the weapon in hand against the reactionary regime and imperialism, the indigenous women of the Mexican Atenco, who continued their resistance in spite of mass violations, the African women, who are fighting against AIDS, hunger, poverty and war, to the female workers struggling against the brutal exploitation in the free trade zones in South Korea and for dignified conditions of work and life and the women in Brazil fighting for land a diverse picture of struggles, which the labouring women are conducting today turns out. Judging it by both, its forms of action and by its contents and ideological points of view, the democratic women's

movement is as diverse as the World March of Women, which adopted another character almost in every country. Nevertheless, there are many things in common concerning the type of problems as well as the demands raised, from which many root points for cooperation in the framework of the democratic and revolutionary women's work may result.

In order to create an international organisation of women today, it is necessary to show efforts especially for the ripening of some pre-conditions. However, in the field of concrete coordination of the struggles, actions of solidarity and international conferences, where experiences and points of view may be exchanged, even today a lot more is possible than actually happens. In this context, it is a duty to increase solidarity among the labouring women and the women's organisations both at national and international level.

An impressive example for such a form of action and organisation of the labouring women are the women meetings taking place every year in Argentina.

For 23 years the labouring women are meeting every year in Argentina and discussing together many different topics affecting them. In the beginning, 700 women met, today they are tens of thousands, who celebrate their achievements and continue their struggles. However, with the years passing by not only the number of participants enormously increased, also the debates became more diverse and deep. Women from social, feminist, political, students, trade-unionist, human right, neighbouring districts, cultural and environmental organisations as well as from organisations for the right of land, housing and sexual diversity are meeting with women from many more fields like pensioners, indigenous women, unemployed women, those who are believing and those who do not etc and discuss a wide spectrum of topics, which concern women generally or currently. From issues like sports, health, and communication to political strike, violation and abortion nearly no sphere of life remains untouched. The women are discussing in a democratic way in workshops, are exchanging ideas, are learning from each other, analysing their experiences and developing prospects for future struggles.

The countrywide women's meetings, where also women delegations, above all from Latin America and also from other countries of the world are participating, contributed a lot to the understanding how the political, economical, cultural, religious and social systems are built historically on the basis of the gender

and social division of labour and produce patriarchal and capitalist hierarchies and oppression. At the meetings, women question not only political and economical structures of power, but also cultural, ethnical and social conventions, forced on them for thousands of years.

The yearly meetings of the labouring women in Argentina, where the application of direct democracy is given a special importance, are playing a significant role for the activation and organisation of the democratic women's movement. Every year, the women are returning with new energy, new insights and concrete actions plans from the meetings and the results are visible in more self-confidence and being ready

In spite of many progresses concerning the activation of women in the revolutionary lines, there are still many problems, however in a country like Nepal, which still has heavy feudal marks, this should not be surprising.

for playing a leading role or also in country-wide campaigns, like the one demanding freedom to Romina Tejerina, which turned into an important pillar of the struggle of the Argentinean women's movement against violence, violation and patriarchal justice.

What needs to be done is to create such examples of permanent forms of organisation, through which it was successful to integrate the broad masses of the labouring women and to activate them, also elsewhere.

### **Socialism and women's emancipation**

The source of the oppression of woman is the private property. Since the transition from collective property to private property and the division of the society into classes, women have been oppressed not only as members of the oppressed classes or nations, but also because of the gender oppression.

The emancipation of women and all humanity will be possible by abolishing the classes and the private property and reaching communism. This task can

only be fulfilled if the working class, as the most revolutionary class, completes its mission. Half of the working class consists of women and the task of the communist work among women is to win these women for the communist party and for socialism. Socialism, the first stage of communism, abolishes the private property of the principal means of production and thus opens the way leading to the emancipation of women. However, the complete emancipation of women will be in communism, where any kind of private property and the class society will vanish.

Socialism does not only open the way for the emancipation of women by abolishing the private property of the means of production, but at the same time fights on the front lines with the measures taken by the socialist power and the laws adopted against the oppression of women, reaction and the reactionary

The yearly meetings of the labouring women in Argentina, where the application of direct democracy is given a special importance, are playing a significant role for the activation and organisation of the democratic women's movement.

traditions and social values remaining from the old society. We cannot consider the problem of the emancipation of women as process proceeding gradually and automatically, but the force of power itself will be used in order to organise this process effectively. Housework like cooking, looking after children and washing will be socialised, violence against women will be banned and punished severely, by means of laws the relation between man and women will turn into a voluntary association, by the increasing participation of women in production and social life, the way for their development will be paved, by means of mechanisms of positive discrimination, the participation of women in education, production and political life will be insistently increased. By these and many more concrete steps, the emancipation of women and together with women the emancipation of the whole society will advance on the road to freedom.

### The communists, the Comintern and the women's issue

Already in the times of the International I, the international communist movement treated the women's issue as a central question and put it especially during the Comintern determinately at the agenda. In 1920, at the time of the II World Congress of the Comintern, the International Women's Secretariat (IWS) of the Comintern was founded, which had an own central leadership and an own apparatus and committees according to that working also in public, and it actively interfered in many struggles. However, in spite of many positive developments and achievements lasting until today, like March 8, International Day of Struggle of the Labouring Women, which was introduced as an international day of struggle by the Secretary in 1921 in honour of the role played by the women in the Russian revolution following a tradition of the International II, the communist work among women of the Comintern remained limited in its long-term results.

In 1926, the Women's Secretariat was reformed and finally, in 1935, completely disbanded. It is an omission, that this period has not yet been analyzed in detail by the international communist movement. Although the communist women's work undertook important steps in the framework of the Comintern, it was still very much at the beginning if considered all in all. This becomes obvious very clearly when looking at the number of women within the communist parties, which is an important criteria for the success of communist work among women. At that time, Czechoslovakia reached the highest number of female party members with 20%. In Norway, 19.7% of the party members were women, in Germany, 17% of the 130.000 Members of the Communist Party of Germany were female in 1928, in Switzerland 13% and in the UK 14.2%. Although, in many parties of the Comintern the situation was much worse. In the Communist Party of France for example, the percentage was only 3-4% in 1924 and fell to 1.7% in 1926 and even to 0.6% in 1929. In Italy, the situation was similar.

After the October revolution, which was a great leap forward on the way of the liberation of women, many measures for the improvements of the situation of women were introduced. Among others, steps towards the socialization of housework and education of children, day-nurseries, introduction of laundrettes, public canteens, legalization of termination of pregnancy, introduction of civil marriage and civil divorce

were taken. However, even in the socialist Soviet Union many remnants of the thousands-of-years-long oppression of women remained in several fields of social life like production, family and political activity and this also affected negatively the active participation of women in developing and leading the political process at higher levels. Consequently, the number of women in the central committee after the October revolution was never more than 3 and the number of substitute members never more than 6 women. In times, when the number of CC members was in total 70 on average, not more than 3 women were represented there. At the party congresses in the period from 1912 to 1952, the percentage of female delegates was between 1% to maximum 13.9%.

Despite all the disadvantageous conditions, all the negative tradition inherited and all the difficulties, this scene deserves to be questioned.

Furthermore we have to take into consideration, that men have thousand of years of experiences of leadership, meanwhile the world of women essentially is restricted to kitchen and children. It would be illusory to expect that this vast difference of the different preconditions of men and women can be overcome in a few years.

#### **Problems of the communist work among women today: From March 8 to March 8**

Today, the labouring women unambiguously are worldwide part of the sections of society most exposed to poverty, lack of rights, exploitation and oppression. 70% of the 1.3 billion of the poorest people are women. The labouring women are representing a big potential for the revolutionary movement.

In spite of many difficulties and organisational weaknesses, there are many struggles and resistances, where women are standing in the first lines; be it against the demolition of houses in the labouring districts, against national oppression, against sexual violence, for better working conditions in the factories, for the right to healthcare, education etc. However, the majority of these struggles is lacking in a continuous organisation and a revolutionary leadership. On one hand, this is caused by the fact, that in our days the revolutionary and communist parties are quiet small and without influence in general, but on the other hand this is also due to the fact that the existing revolutionary and communist organisations and parties are weak especially in developing a practical policy or have a wrong attitude concerning the women's issue.



All in all, it is conspicuous that the communist work among women is very weak and that a communist women's movement in the world, which is able to win the masses of the labouring women for revolution and socialism, is out of the question today.

Many revolutionary and communist organisations remember the women's issue once a year on March 8, but during the rest of the year there is no special, continuing women's work. Unfortunately, the lacking in a permanent, organisational anchored work among women is often accompanied by an arrogant, sectarian attitude towards existing initiatives in the women's work, what leads to the sad situation, that the communists and revolutionaries effectively postpone the struggle for the emancipation of women to an unfixed date after revolution.

The current situation of the democratic women's movement in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan is a typical example of this. One trend within the movement is ideologically based on the radical and socialist feminist trends and the reformist parties following it. Another one is the red trend, which gained continuity and special organisations and is carried out persistently for years by the communist women. And a third trend is formed by the other revolutionary organisations, which tackle women's work from March 8 to March 8 and therefore are not able to save themselves from lacking of policy in their atti-





tude, neither on March 8 nor concerning the other problems of women. The ideological struggle continuing between the first two trends, however not leading to an end of the unity in action for years, finally, on March 8, 2005 turned out into the situation, that for the first time after years the communist women split from the feminists, the Kurdish women and reformist parties like EMEP and ODP, who persisted in celebrating March 8 without men, and decided to have a separate meeting. The other revolutionary organisations, which did not participate in the organisation of the celebrations of March 8 under the pretext of the presence of the feminists, which did not show any efforts in order to push back the hegemony of feminism through participating together with the communist women in the March 8 activities and other women platforms, which do not even on March 8 more than just talking about women's issue, decided to take part in the organisation of March 8 that year following the proposal of the communist women. However, finally they also separated from the communist women and organised a March 8 at the square of Beyazit isolated from the masses of labouring women. The communist women organised, in contrast, another meeting at the square of Kadikoy based on their own forces and the masses of labouring women.

Whereas the division with the feminists was a classic example of how they direct themselves against, first

of all, revolutionary men and thus against the unity of the labourers, the attitude of the majority of the revolutionary organisations was a sad example of a high-flown and narrow attitude of mass work, of how far away they are from the labouring masses of women and from seeing and being willing to change their own reality. Without carrying out a continuous mass work among the women workers, building organisations in the labouring districts and launching political campaign among women, they want to give the class character back to March 8 in one single day.

However, unfortunately the attitudes of many revolutionary and communist organisations at international level are not other than this. In the praxis, the international revolutionary and communist movement does not show the appropriate weight and interest to the women's issue. This is to be seen on the hand at the lacking attention paid and the lacking exertion of influence in the democratic women's movement, and on the other hand, also in the way of approaching the communist work among women. The attitude to postpone the struggle for the emancipation of women to sometime after revolution unfortunately is still very common and thus priority to the work among labouring women is given seldom. Several parties calling themselves communist are not working in democratic women organisations and have also no special means internally for the mobilisation and integration of women in the struggle for revolution and

socialism, although it is evident that women are in a special situation due to the hundred years of slavery and the double oppression compared with their class brothers and that it is necessary to develop special means in order to organise and win them for socialism.

Another wrong view is to limit work among women to the typical problems of women. This unavoidably leads to the situation that in the centre of women's work are not the proletarian women, being part of the most revolutionary class, but the most oppressed strata like housewives and victims of violence. This way, the class character of the women's issue, similar to the way feminists do that, is ignored.

Some times, revolutionary and communist organisations even fall behind some formally applied measures of the bourgeoisie or bourgeois movements. In bourgeois parties there are many women in leading positions, like for example Christina Kirchner, Michelle Bachelet, Angela Merkel, Gloria Arroyo or Condolezza Rice, just to mention some of them. The fact, that this is not the slightest progress for the emancipation of women, on the contrary, that these women are carrying out an enemy policy against the laboring classes, half of them women, should not make us forget the glaringly obvious weakness of the revolutionary and communist organizations.

Another example is that due to the influence of the feminists, even at the meetings of the social forums the rule prevails that men and women may take the floor alternately. As women also there are lesser than men in number, women are privileged. Yet, at activities and meetings of revolutionaries it is not unusual that mostly men speak meanwhile women hardly get the chance to speak. In terms of representation, the revolutionary and communist movement is in general old and male. We cannot simply accuse such facts by the fact that it is us, who have got the true program for the liberation of women.

#### **Guarantee of continuous work among women: special organisations**

In order to develop a continuous work among the masses of labouring women and to win the female workers for the communist party, special means are necessary. Here we have to notice that not the agendas of struggle, but the organisational means are special! Work among women does not necessarily mean to approach the women with their special problems, but to mobilise them by use of special means, according to the women's psychology, for the social struggle as a whole. Concerning this, our party writes

in the documents of its unity congress: *"The most typical and common form of narrowness is to understand from the work among women to explain to the women, the women as the oppressed gender, the women's issue and to reduce work among women to that or to see it as something limited to that. ... It is absolutely correct and necessary that the party applies special methods in the work among women, taking into account the special psychology of women, however this does not mean that the party takes, or should take, the women's issue as the basis of its propaganda, agitation and organisation in the work among women."*

One form of the special means for the organisation of women at the level of the communist party is the women's committees. There should exist such women's committees, which do not form a parallel

The attitude to postpone the struggle for the emancipation of women to sometime after revolution unfortunately is still very common and thus priority to the work among labouring women is given seldom. Another wrong view is to limit work among women to the typical problems of women.

structure but are linked to every party organ from the very bottom up to the Central Committee, at all levels of the party structure. Only the existence of permanent organs guarantees continuous work.

A parallel structure would go into the direction of a women's party, which is contrary to the fundamental idea of Marxism-Leninism to unite the most progressive part, the vanguard of the working class in one party and not divide it into gender or ethnic origin. Since any political power is the power of a class, political parties, which are the tools of a class to conquer the power, are the highest form of organisation of a class and as women are no class of its own the idea of a special party only for women is wrong.

Another important mechanism is the "positive discrimination". Given the fact that men and women do not have the same preconditions due to the social conditions, same treatment means nothing else but discrimination of women. In order to compensate this disadvantage and to promote the political development of women, our party uses the "positive discrimination". This means that women get specially promoted in a systematic way and supported in their development.



The communist parties have two fundamental tasks in the women's work. One aspect is the work within the democratic women's movement and the other to win the proletarian women for the communist party. Our party formulated this in the documents of the unity congress as follows: *"Under the social order and political regime of today, the democratic women's movement, consisting of different elements and not being homogenous, is an important reserve of the proletariat. To work for mobilising the broadest women masses of the democratic women's movement, being a reserve of the proletarian revolution, on the*

*line of the party is one dimension and form of applying the strategy of revolution of the party and trying to establish the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution. The communist vanguard should support the women in every democratic push, in every conflict they enter with the capital, it should be the most determined and consequent militant of their cause.*

*Secondly, half of the proletarian (and labouring) masses are female proletarians and labourers. So that the communist vanguard can organise them as the half of the army of revolution, it should take the work among proletarian and labouring (and young) women as half of the party work. Beyond winning and mobilising the reserve, the communist work among women is the problem of organising the proletarian women, forming the half of the army of the revolution of the organisation, in the ranks of the MLCP-F."*

Furthermore, it is another urgent task of the women's work of the communists to organise and develop the women's work at international level. In many areas of the class struggle the need for international solidarity and coordination has been understood already and initiatives corresponding to that have been developed. However, in the sphere of women's work we are still in our infancy meanwhile the bourgeois and petite-bourgeois women obtained at least a certain level of international communication and networking.

Today more than ever, in the face of recent weakness of the communist women's work, international contacts and exchanges are important, in order to learn from each other, to exchange experiences and to strengthen the struggles of the labouring women in different countries. To postpone this task until a better cooperation develops among the communist parties themselves would be wrong. On the contrary, cooperation in solidarity of the revolutionary and communist women can also contribute to developing and deepening the relations among the revolutionary and communist organisations.

Let us conclude with the words of Inessa Armand, who rightly said that if the emancipation of women is unthinkable without communism, also communism is unthinkable without the complete emancipation of women.

*On February 27-28, 2008, the shipbuilding workers of Tuzla went into action as if they wanted to confirm the optimistic and hopeful foresights and expectations for 2008 from the revolutionary point of view. The Tuzla shipbuilding workers have successfully passed a stage and have won a very important battle.*

*The industrial hell created by neoliberalism at Tuzla fell in the centre of society's agenda by battering the deaf walls of censorship, ignorance and callousness, at a very critical moment when air raids and land operations continued in Southern Kurdistan and the colonial war was reaching its peak.*

*The zone-wide strike at Tuzla means overcoming the disintegration of the working class due to flexible and lawless working. This would also mean that a zone-wide strike is at the same time a political action as an answer given and as a posture shown by the shipbuilding workers by founding their class unity against the neoliberal attacks of capital.*

*The realisation of a strike throughout a zone where the production is highly subcontracted-fragmented has played the role of opening or clearing the way by being a hard blow against the open or hidden pessimistic thoughts that the instrument of strike could not be carried out at all because of the fragmentation of production. It has proved to the friends as well as enemies that a strike can be carried out even at a zone of a subcontracting system.*

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