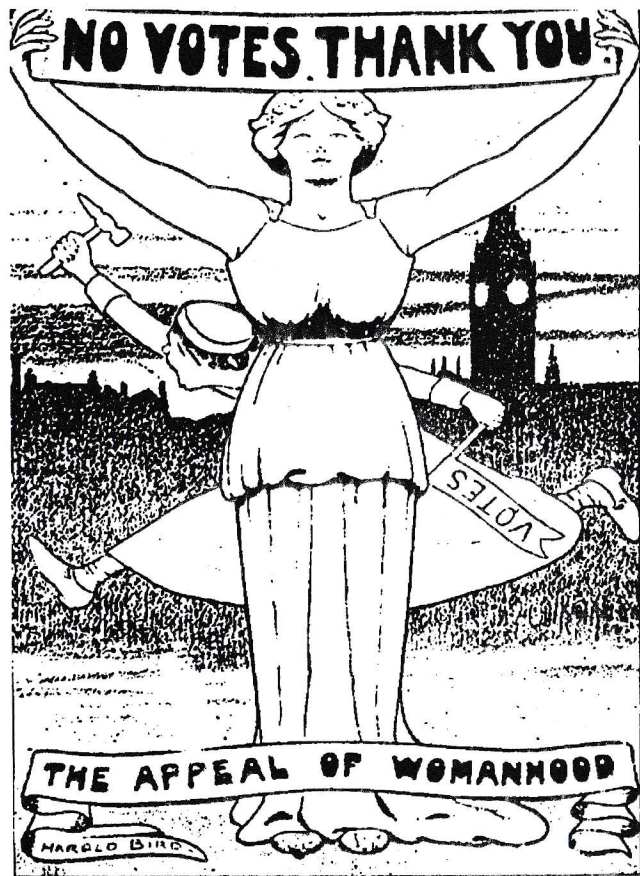


"No Votes Thank You"

In the past we always took the side of women who were beaten, discriminated against, and excluded etc., regardless of their social background and nationality, political and religious *beliefs*, and so on. Now they take the side of women candidates for parliamentary elections, regardless of their political affiliations. Those women who rise to power on a feminist platform became sucked into the system, and fail to use their position to the advantage of other women.



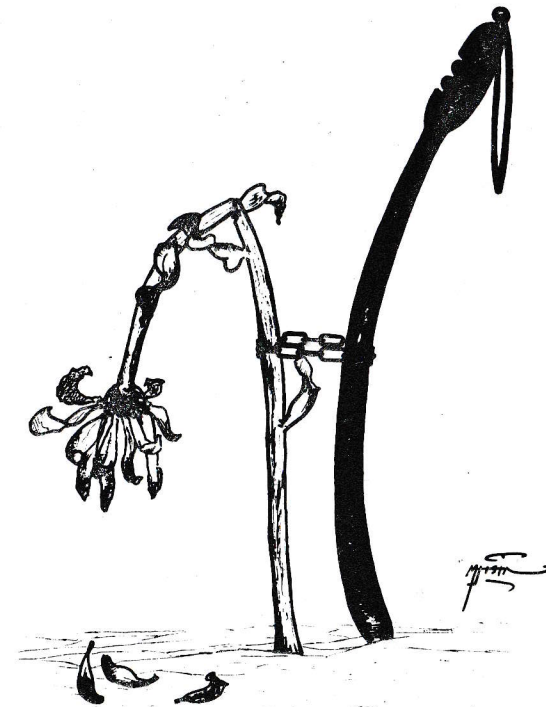
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"We come to bury the Turkish Republic, not to praise it"

**FUNDAMENTALISM, NATIONALISM,
and MILITARISM in TURKEY**

by the 5th May Group

and



FEMINISM in TURKEY

by Mine Ege

THE FIFTH OF MAY GROUP

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Archive E

The Fifth of May Group (1993) is a group of Turkish and Kurdish Anarchists in Exile. On the 6th of May 1972, the Turkish State hung three revolutionaries, amongst them Deniz Gezmiş. The event is generally a hallmark for the birth of the radical movement in Turkey. We chose the 5th of May, when the three men were still alive.

The Fifth of May is an anarchist group that includes anarchists from different tendencies, and has a pluralist perspective. This pluralist perspective together with the idea of the individual autonomy form the basis of group harmony. We have no fixed political line and rigid principles. However, we believe that it is important to fight against nationalism and militarism on the basis of class. It is also crucial to fight against sexism and racism.

One of our main activity towards Turkey is translation of anarchist literature into Turkish. We have so far translated several books into Turkish. We also published books, pamphlets, and articles in both Turkish and English.

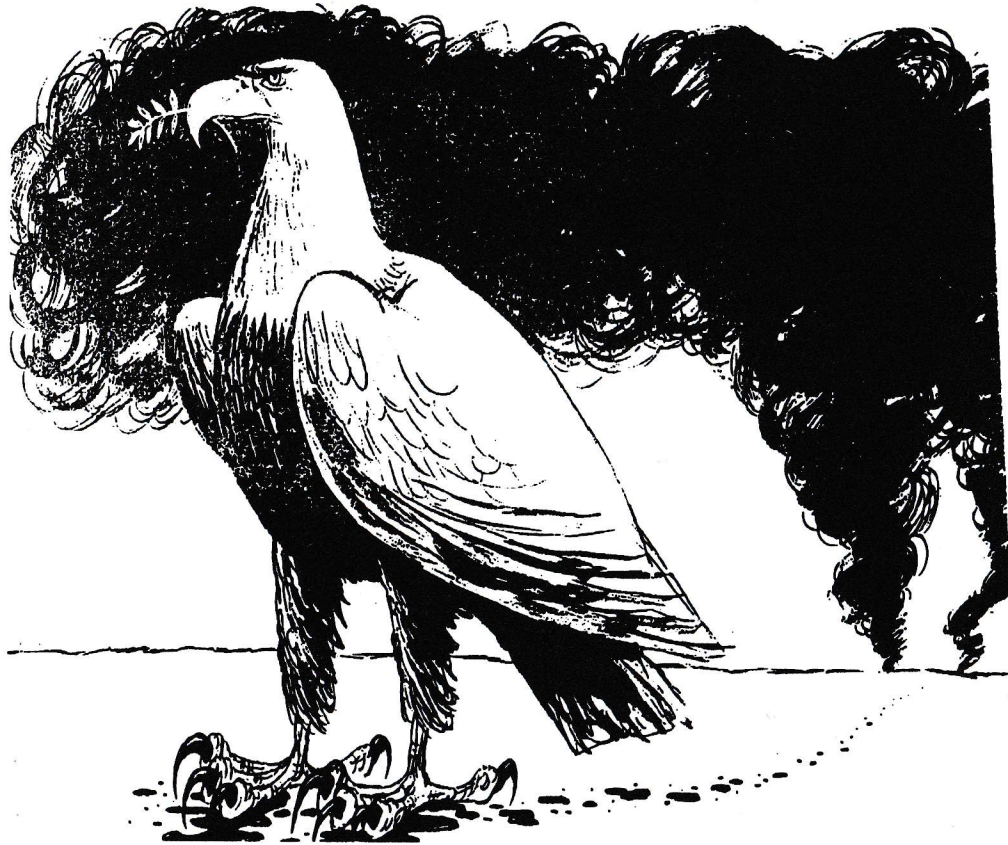
Some activists of the Fifth of May Group work locally with other groups in London as well as with libertarian and radical individuals and groups in various campaigns and initiatives in other countries. We are also in contact with anarchists in Europe, USA, Middle East and Latin America.

The Fifth of May Group tries to diffuse anarchist ideas among the Turkish and Kurdish community in London. Some of us are involved in the Campaign against Compulsory Military Service in Turkey (ZAK). The Campaign was formed at the beginning of 1996 in support of Osman Murat Ülke, a conscientious objector, who is still being held in prison. Apart from local issues here in London and national campaigns, a focus of our activity has been nationalism and militarism.

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London, September 1998.



Abbreviations

CHP	(Republican People's Party)
DP	(Democratic Party)
DİSK	(Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions)
TİP	(Workers' Party of Turkey)
AP	(Justice Party)
MNP	(National Order Party)
MSP	(National Salvation Party)
MHP	(Nationalist Movement Party)
RP	(Welfare Party)
ANAP	(Motherland Party)
DYP	(True Path Party)
PKK	(Workers' Party of Kurdistan)
İSK	(İzmir War Resisters)
SWP	(Socialist Worker Party)
İP	(Worker Party)
ÖDP	(Freedom and Solidarity Party)
İHD	(Human Rights Association)
MIT	(National Intelligence Service)

Chronology

1908:	The Committee of Union and Progress comes to power.
1915:	The Committee of Union and Progress government massacres 1,500,000 Armenian people.
1921:	Jan 28: the Kemalist Ankara government kills Mustafa Suphi, the leader of the Communist Party of Turkey, & his comrades.
1923:	October 29: the foundation of the Republic. CHP rules with one-party dictatorship.
1925:	The Rebellion of Sheikh Said.
1938:	The Dersim Rebellion. Kemal Atatürk dies.
1939:	İsmet İnönü replaces Atatürk as a second dictator.
1946:	A new party, DP.
1950:	General election: DP wins, CHP loses.
1956:	September 6-7: Patriotic mob attack Armenians & Greeks in Istanbul.
1960:	May 27: DP overthrown by a <i>coup d'état</i> .
1961:	Adnan Menderes (Prime Minister), Fatin Rüştü Zorlu (Foreign Secretary), & Hasan Polatkan (Treasurer), hung. TİP founded.
1963:	Two army officers, Talat Aydemir and Fethi Gürcan, hung for at tempting another coup.
1965:	AP wins the general election. DİSK was founded.
1968:	Students occupy universities.
1970:	June 15-16: a big workers' uprising in Istanbul.
1971:	March 12: a military coup.
1972:	May 6: three revolutionary young men, Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan and Yusuf Aslan, hung by the military regime.
1974:	July: general amnesty. Turkey occupies Northern Cyprus.
1977:	1 May celebrations: 34 killed, many injured.
1979:	500 people killed by fascists in Maraş.
1980:	September 12: another military coup.
1985:	PKK begins its guerilla war.
1993:	July 2: Islamic fundamentalists set fire to a hotel in Sivas; 37 people killed.
1995:	March: Police kill 24 in Gazi demonstrations in Istanbul.
1996:	November: the Susurluk scandal.
1997:	February 28: "post-modernist military coup".
1998:	The government suppresses the Islamist RP.

Fundamentalism, Nationalism, and Militarism in Turkey

by the Fifth of May Group

THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT and the military are preparing to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Turkish Republic. In relation to this so-called “glorious” event, the government even plans to introduce a new amnesty law for prisoners—political prisoners, for example, prisoners of conscience, radical Leftists, Kurdish resisters, and Islamists are, of course, not included. Although some of our Leftists are very willing to join in these “pious orgies,” the Turkish Republic in fact established itself with the blood and tears of the oppressed.

Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938) had founded the Republic of Turkey in 1923 upon six principles: republicanism, laicism¹, reformism, nationalism, populism, and statism. *Under the Kemalist regime the State was set free from the dominance of religion and religion was put under the control of the State.* Especially the ideas of Republicanism, Laicism, and Reformism were made good use of by the Kemalist élite to oppress people of Islamic faith. The relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed generally involves both oppression and resistance. But the relationship between Kemalists and Islamists in Turkey, as we will see, does not only consist in that: they also tend to exploit each other to achieve their ends.

Islamic reaction in Turkey manifested itself through two channels: rebellion of the conservative Islamic masses and the Islamist political movement.

People’s discontent during the first decades of the Republic usually took the form of spontaneous explosions of anger on the part of the conservative Islamic masses, who were mainly illiterate and influenced to a great degree by religious sentiments. The Rebellion of Sheikh Said in 1925, which was a rebellion of Sunni Kurds in the Turkish Southeast, is a good example. The army murderously put down both smaller and bigger scale rebellions, including the Rebellion of Sheikh Said. Hundreds of people who rose in opposition or armed resistance against the prevailing social and political order were sentenced to death in arbitrary and hasty trials.

The Islamist political movement, on the other hand, rather than coming into conflict with the State, sought allies within the ruling élite by adopting a moderate line. After the Second World War the change from a one-party to a multi-party system {this parliamentary change resulted in a split within the ruling élite: on the one hand, the Republican People’s Party (CHP) that was the ruling party, and on the other, the DP that emerged from within a faction in the CHP} allowed the Islamist movement to find an ally in the Democratic Party (DP). In order to gain most of the votes of people in rural areas, the DP sought to take the Islamist movement under its auspices, and won the general election in 1950 by a wide margin. But after the overthrow of the DP by a military *coup d’état* on May 27, 1960, it was the Justice Party (AP) inheriting the politics of the

banned DP that won once again the general election in 1965. The AP utilised both the conservative Islamic masses and the Islamist movement as street forces against the rising youth and workers’ movements.² Merchants from the provinces who became richer under the auspices of the AP encouraged and funded the offensive actions of those (artisans, small tradesmen, and people from rural regions who gave up all hopes in the future) who were getting poorer and angrier because of the growing economic pressures and who in the last resort dropped the anchor of religion.

In 1969, the leaders of the Islamist movement who had hitherto organised under the umbrella of AP felt that they were enough powerful to form their own party, which was called the National Order Party (MNP). However, on March 12, 1971, the military staged another *coup d’état*, crushed the revolutionary movement, and suppressed the MNP.³ The military which had previously turned a blind eye when the Islamist movement was being used by the State against the revolutionary movement viewed the aim of the Islamist movement to gain the majority in the parliament as a threat.

During the 1970s the State continued with its policy of utilising the fanatic Islamic sections of society against the revolutionary movement. Especially in rural towns the State deliberately provoked conservative Sunni people to organise pogroms under the leadership of the Grey Wolves—members of the fascist party, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)—against a particular heretic sect in Islam religion commonly known as *Alevi* people.

The so-called “non-modernist” Islamist movement gathered its most powerful forces in the 1980s, when the so-called “counter-fundamentalist”⁴ Kemalist military made yet

another *coup d’état* on September 12, 1980. The military supported the Islamist movement, despite all its “modernist” discourse, and thus benefited from that movement’s ideological power to control and pacify the people. The Islamist movement, on the other hand, was not at all reluctant to make use of every opportunity the State offered for its purpose of climbing the ladder of power.

Unfortunately, even people among Marxist intellectuals and Leftists in Turkey fail to understand the true basis of the Laicism-versus-Islamism conflict in depth—an important issue today that dominates the ideological and political agenda of Turkey—and persist in taking the army’s side in this conflict. The fact remains that this is fundamentally a power struggle between two forces, which are not principally very different from each other, rather than being a conflict between the two systems. The modernist army is as conservative as the Islamist movement and the political cadres of the Islamist movement are as much modernist as the army. In other words, the power struggle is between the two political forces both of which are modernist-conservative.⁵

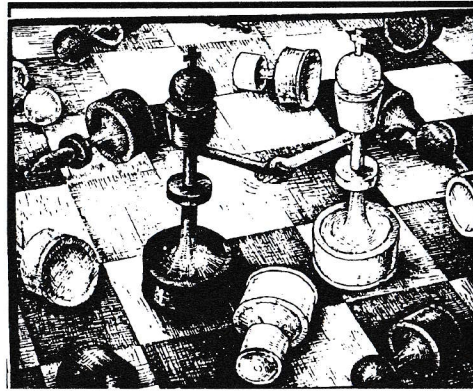
For this reason, it can be said that the Islamist movement in Turkey is fundamentally different from the fundamentalist movement in Algeria and Iran. A considerable number of people from the prominent section of the Islamist movement are businessmen. Some are still working in the State institutions. Fundamentalist elements in the movement are marginalised. Unlike the leaders of the fundamentalist movement in Algeria, Islamist leaders in Turkey are in no position to fight to the death, because their social and political roles do not allow them to confront the State. Moreover, they have close links with Saudi Arabia whose integration with the world’s capitalist system is the highest among the Islamic countries. This is

another factor that reduces the degree of radicalism in the movement.

One of the most important characteristics of the Islamist movement in Turkey is that Islamists, whose long-term aim is to form a religious State such as the Iranian one, instead of coming into conflict with the State, seek to make the Islamist ideology and lifestyle embedded in all areas of society—from education to fashion, from intellectual life to sport, from the media to sexual life—by trying to adjust Islamic values to the process of modernisation.⁶ By these efforts they attempt to establish their ideological hegemony in the society and *then* conquer the State, unlike Jacobin-Kemalists who seek to establish their ideological hegemony in the society by means of the State. In this sense, the long and bitter conflict between Kemalists and Islamists both of whom are oppressive and monolithic is a struggle for ideological hegemony as well as for political power. Kemalists appear now to have taken over the lead in the struggle for ideological hegemony thanks to the media, the military and the education system. For example, the media tries to create a wave of secular-patriotic hysteria in the society, similar to the anti-communist hysteria of the 1950s in the McCarthy's America.

In the 1980s, the Islamist current, on the one hand, managed to strengthen its ranks among people of Islamic faith, who were reacting against the Kemalist dictatorship, and on the other, gained greatly from the level of protection and subsequent opportunities the same dictatorship offered. From the mid-1990s onwards the Islamist movement, organised under the Welfare Party (RP), was to gain more than 30 per cent of the votes and be the biggest right-wing party (being the biggest right-wing party means being the majority in the parliament). They, therefore, decided to drop their forty-years-

old role of being an instrument at the hands of the ruling élite and lay claim to a direct share in power. The Generals leading the army had been accustomed to sharing power for fifty years with the leadership of the DP-AP tradition, members of whom were themselves not Islamists but still flirting with them. In the 1980s, after the military junta closed down the AP, this tradition was divided in two: the Motherland Party (ANAP) and the True Path Party (DYP). Owing to this important change the Generals panicked and felt that their positions in the power



structure were threatened. In this situation, the militarist clique began to consolidate the dictatorship, seeking the tacit support of *Alevi* people who were the target of fundamentalist attacks, some parts of the Left, and the middle classes. Moreover, by putting tanks in the streets and using the power of the National Security Council, a body that legitimises army interventions in government business, the militarist clique made a “post-modernist *coup d'état*” in February 1997,⁷ suppressed the Islamist RP with a rigid anti-fundamentalist propaganda that reminds us the early period—1920s and 1930s—of the Kemalist dictatorship.⁸ But the RP whose main tactic has always been to obey the Generals chose to calm its followers and supporters, and began to wait for the future times when the secular dictatorship would loosen its grip and perhaps need RP again.

Nationalism, Populism, and Statism, the other three principles upon which the Republic was established, are merely expressions of repression against various ethnic groups and nationalities, in particular Kurds who live within the national borders of Turkey, and against Turkish Cypriots who live in Northern Cyprus, occupied since 1974 by the Turkish army. It was the ruling Committee of Union and Progress that first put the Nation State's racist politics into practice during the First World War—the last period of the Ottoman Empire—by exterminating Armenian people in 1915, who were in substantial numbers mainly in the East and Northeast. “Estimates of the Armenians killed in the deportations and massacres of 1915-1916 range from a few hundred thousands to 1,500,000.”⁹ When the Republic was founded, the Kemalist ruling élite inherited the same racist politics, and there were several uprisings and rebellions in Kurdistan, the most important of which are the Rebellion of Sheikh Said in 1925 and the Dersim Rebellion in 1938.¹⁰

Unlike the Islamist movement, the Kurdish political movement, pioneered by Kurdish intellectuals, could not find any allies within the élite, and had to endure repression for many years. Only in the 1960s when the Turkish Left began to rise was it able to open up and express itself to a certain degree. In the 1970s, various Kurdish nationalist groups from different tendencies, not having found in the Turkish Leftist movement a platform on which they could declare their own cultural and national demands, separated from the Left and experienced an organisational preliminary period to assert their rights for independence or autonomy. One of these groups, the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK), however, rather than attacking the Turkish State, began to eliminate rival Kurdish and Turkish

organisations of the Left, and thus established its power base in the region and dominated the area by force. It is interesting to point out that the State ignored the PKK's actions and followed a policy of non-interference. The fact that the PKK and other groups were fighting and destroying each other did not matter much for the State.

With the military *coup d'état* of 12 September, 1980, the Generals tried to militarise the whole society. The aim of this Latin American type of *coup d'état*, which came later in Turkey than in some Latin American countries, where the militaries were retreating back to the barracks, was to gag the people. Did they achieve it? No. On the contrary, such an appalling atmosphere of oppression created among the people a feverish desire for freedom and democracy. The reason, therefore, for the collapse of the Turkish Left after the 1980s, which was dominated by Stalinism, should be attributed to this desire for freedom and democracy rather than to the military's attacks on the Left. It was inevitable that the Leftist organisations would lose their “charm” particularly in the eyes of Leftist people, considering that these organisations ignored and scorned the idea of freedom, individual initiative and organisational democracy, while they praised “the dictatorship of the proletariat” and “the vanguard party.” This led to the emergence of anarchism, feminism¹¹ and other currents such as libertarian socialism. The number of people who sympathised with such currents increased in the 1980s, particularly in big cultural centres such as Istanbul, Ankara, and İzmir. Such ideals were favoured more than others, because the idea of freedom and individual initiative was important.

Of course, there were differences between the big cities in western Turkey and the rural areas in Kurdistan in terms of what

people felt and heard and what kind of existence they led. The general atmosphere of terror and repression together with the racist practices of the Turkish State made life extremely unbearable for the Kurdish people. In such circumstances, in which there was no alternative other than to support the PKK, the desire for freedom of the Kurdish masses was channelled into this organisation, where not a vestige of freedom could be found.

The PKK began its guerrilla war in the mid-1980s, when the military was still in power and the regime looked as powerful and intact as before. The Kurdish masses responded positively and gave active support to the PKK. The PKK found its most active supporters and followers among young people in rural areas who had no possibility of employment and lost all hopes in the future. The guerrilla warfare and the number of deaths on both sides reached their peak in the early 1990s, when the Turkish State decided to curb all the guerrillas, their followers, and supporters by counter-guerrilla war. The State organised its own Secret Gangs, backed by the Army, its own Secret Police and Gendarmerie to murder thousands of Kurdish people. Between 1990 and 1996 thousands of villages in the Southeast were either destroyed or burnt down. People were forced to leave their villages, and if they did not, they were brutally killed. Many “disappeared” and their murderers—Secret State Gangs’ members—were sheltered and protected by the State itself. Despite all this, the guerrilla movement did not stop; on the contrary, it grew.

However, after the Susurluk scandal in 1996,¹² the PKK leadership, which was under the influence of Yalçın Küçük (a Stalinist writer and a supporter of Kemalism, who worked as an expert at the Institute of State Planning in the 1960s), seemed to

believe that the military had shifted its policy and was now willing to give some concessions to the Kurdish guerrilla movement. The PKK henceforth sought to reach a compromise.

Until the Susurluk scandal, the Generals had been in close collaboration with the then ruling party (DYP) and the police in order to destroy the Kurdish guerrilla movement. But after the general election in 1995, this collaboration changed into a quarrel between the Generals leading the army and the DYP, because the DYP now engaged in a coalition with the Islamist RP. This angered the Generals. They blamed the DYP for all the failure of their bloody war against Kurds and for the murders committed by Secret State Gangs. The Susurluk scandal created an unmissable opportunity for the military to overthrow the DYP-RP coalition. (We have mentioned this “post-modernist *coup d’état*” above.)

The PKK still proceeds with its policy of compromise. However, army operations in the Kurdish regions near or over the Iraqi border have increased, and the PKK leadership seems to be disillusioned because of this, though they have not changed their idea of coming to an agreement. The army, on the other hand, seems as if it does not wish to end this war. It is obvious that the prolongation of the war on a certain level serves the army to pay its high debts, but most importantly, to determine the political life of the country. It is the young, the poor and the oppressed in Turkey and Kurdistan who perish everyday that pay the price of this bloody war. The fact is that the Turkish army tends to recruit its soldiers among the poor young people. The rich always avoid joining the army by “legal” ways and those who happen to join find their own ways (personal contacts with élite bureaucrats) not to go to the front. Many poor young

people refuse to be part of this injustice and brutal savagery. There are more than 300,000 deserters in Turkey and this number seems to be on the increase.¹³

Wars are the grave-diggers of revolution and they result in more despotic regimes for both sides. Even if wars may result in revolutions, in the last analysis they destroy them. (The First World War resulted in the Russian Revolution, but the Civil War destroyed it.) The war in Kurdistan not only militarises every cell of the society, but causes in the long term the complete paralysis of society as regards violence. It not only creates and feeds chauvinistic feelings among Turkish and Kurdish people, but helps an authoritarian sentiment spread, to the detriment of the cause of freedom.

All this makes it necessary for us to be more active in the struggles to stop the war. The Turkish army must stop all its operations in Kurdistan. We have always been in support of the struggle of Kurdish people against the Nation State. This, however, does not mean we support nationalist and patriotic feelings of the oppressed people, nor does it mean we support the PKK, an organisation that wants to create its own State.¹⁴

As Turkish and Kurdish anarchists we also oppose the colonialist policy of the Turkish State as well as its policy of assimilation, settlement, and forced immigration against Turkish Cypriots in Northern Cyprus.¹⁵ We believe that Turkish and Greek Cypriots can solve their own disputes among themselves without any outside intervention and without any manipulation in regard to this or that Cypriot government. The concept of nation is an imaginary concept often employed by ruling élites as the basis of their power structure as well as by aspirant cliques to deceive oppressed mi-

norities. For this reason, we believe not in the so-called self-determination of an imaginary “nation,” but in the *self-government* of voluntary individuals, groups and communities, working and unwaged people, etc.

It is crucial for Turkish, Kurdish, and Greek peoples to be in solidarity with each other against the expansionist and chauvinist policies of the Turkish and Greek States. It is, therefore, important to strengthen the existing links between Turkish, Greek, and Kurdish anarchists.

The people who live within the borders of Turkey have been under the dictatorship of the Kemalist élite for 75 years. The main principle of this dictatorship is called Statism that means domination rather than an economic form of governance by the State. The State continually interferes with our liberty: on the one hand, they say that women should not veil themselves, and on the other, they attempt to check whether female high school students are virgins or not. Everything is dominated by the State, including the media, labour unions, and some parts of the Left. The media is the most important and effective instrument of the present regime to brainwash people into accepting their traditional roles. People, whether they be political or not, are tortured systematically in many police stations and prisons. The patriarchal State indirectly justifies domestic violence against women and children. Workers and peasants are oppressed and exploited as long as the State exists. Poor people who flow day by day into the big cities because of the war in Kurdistan are in desperate situation.

Some of the Left such as the Worker Party (İP) have become organs of the State. Members of İP now carry Turkish flags in demonstrations and attack other organisations of the Left which are in opposition to them. İP also has relations with some fac-

tions of the fascist Grey Wolves. Another party, the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), is a coalition of some Leftist factions. Although it fights against the State to defend democratic rights, it does not go beyond the confines of western democracy.

On the other hand, the radical Left, whose enemy is the Kemalist State, is unfortunately narrow-minded and cannot somehow rescue itself from the Stalinist tradition. According to each organisation of the radical Left, the revolution will only happen, if "the party of the proletariat" gains strength after strength. (There is no disagreement whatsoever among them with regard to this point.) It is ironic that there are so many so-called "parties of the proletariat" which are deadly enemies competing with each other for power. But only a revolution built upon the self-initiative of the masses and individuals and without these self-indulgent parties is likely to be successful.

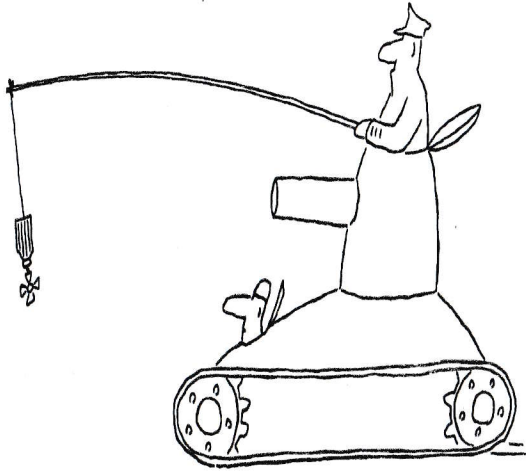
The era of parties has ended. Even their members and followers agree on the fact that all parties are miniature versions of the tyrannical States and bureaucracies of the future. In this regard, what is dead is not only Marxism, but also liberalism, the creator of party systems. This also explains the new interest in anarchist ideas.

We have so far drawn a negative picture of Turkey. It should not be understood from what we have said that the society is under the total control of the State. Despite everything, people resist to the present regime in

various ways and forms; and the parliament, the fig-leaf of the dictatorship, is losing its credibility in the eyes of people. In 1995, for example, *Alevi* people in the Gazi district of Istanbul spontaneously rebelled against the local authorities because of the murders committed by the secret police. There were violent clashes between the police and people for three days. 22 people died and many were injured. In this uprising *Alevi* people organised their own independent networks to fight against the authorities. Another

example of self-organisation is the ecological resistance movement of the Bergama peasants and town people in the form of very creative and imaginative demonstrations against the gold mines run by the Eurogold Company. The Bergama people organised themselves on their

own initiative and did not care what their so-called "leaders" said or did. Nobody except for Bergama peasants and their creative minds could have thought of an illegal demonstration on the Bosphorus Bridge where hundreds of women and men protested half-naked against the government and the Eurogold Company. One of the most interesting aspects of this struggle is the spiritual driving force of the women involved who could neither read nor write. A third example is the Human Rights Association (İHD) that publicises tortures and "disappearances," despite all the attacks of the police and the media. (Its president, Akin Birdal, was recently seriously injured in an attempted assassination.) The significance of



this organisation lies in its brave and uncompromising attitude against political prejudices and nationalist public hysteria. There are also the "Saturday Mothers" who come together every Saturday in the Galatasaray avenue to ask for their "disappeared" children and relatives. The fight of Osman Murat Ülke, a conscientious objector and an activist from İzmir War Resisters (İSK), is also important, because Murat Ülke confronts the huge military machine as an individual and shows to everyone that the individual who has decided to resist is stronger than any weapon.

When we were preparing this paper for publication, another scandal occurred in Turkey: one of the most notorious Turkish mafia bosses, Alaaddin Çakıcı, was caught and arrested in Paris. On him was found a red passport—red passports are usually only given to high-ranking diplomats—given to him by the National Intelligence Service (MİT). It was also found out that before he was caught he exchanged several phone calls with two ministers of the present government of which the military is in control.

The Turkish State is involved in "dirty-work" jobs, including drug trafficking, without which the economy may collapse. It becomes clearer everyday that politicians, the MİT, the police and the military are working with the mafia; that some of the Turkish mafia bosses are even members of the MİT. It is known that Mahmut Yıldırım (code-name "Green"), a mass murderer who is "looked for" by the police, will not be caught, because from the beginning he has been protected by the State.

Corruption goes hand in hand with expansionism. The State corruption is linked with the expansionist policies of the Turkish military. The Generals who are in collaboration with the US and Israel proudly declare that Turkish military forces have the power to occupy several parts of the Middle East, the Balkans, or Caucasio.

It would be best to bury the 75 year old Republic where it belongs, just next to the grave of the Ottoman Empire. Amen to that.



¹ Laicism is slightly different from secularism in that it attaches more importance to the State control of religion.

² The workers' movement in Turkey is such a big subject that it cannot be included within the framework of this essay. But it is necessary to mention some points. The workers' movement grew and became more radicalised in the 1960s. The existing trade unions were and still are servants of the bosses. Some of the founders of the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Union (DİSK) were also founders of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP). Workers struggled very hard to leave their unions and join DİSK. In the course of this struggle they tended to support the revolutionary movement. The peak of this struggle was the workers' uprising in Istanbul in June 1970. Over the following years the movement have never reached that peak again. DİSK is now a confederation that collaborates with the State.

³ The National Salvation Party (MSP) replaced the MNP after the latter's suppression.

⁴ We use the word "fundamentalism" or "fundamentalist" especially for radical Islamists, not for the whole Islamist movement in Turkey.

⁵ This power struggle between Islamists and the Generals also allows them to gain the tacit approval of each other when they use violence against the people. Those who recently sentenced an Islamist playwright to 24 years' imprisonment turned a blind eye to the Sivas massacre. During an Alevi festival in Sivas in 1993 37 people were burnt to death in a hotel fire set by Islamic fundamentalists and the Kemalist military remained silent.

⁶ The most important thing for Islamists is to subjugate women under the patriarchal Islamist rules and prohibitions.

⁷ The military did not overthrow the government directly; it forced the government to resign. Some publications call this "post-modernist coup d'état."

⁸ Religious female students who veil themselves are not accepted to the University of Istanbul. As we are against the repression by religious institutions on individuals, we are also against the repression by State institutions on religious indi-

viduals. Therefore, we strongly oppose this prohibition.

⁹ Ronald Grigor Suny. *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1993, p. 114.

¹⁰ Dersim is one of the regions where Alevi Kurds live.

¹¹ See: Mine Ege's "Feminism in Turkey" and *Anarchism in Turkey*, London, Karambol Publications, 1994.

¹² In a traffic accident near the town of Susurluk in Balıkesir, a police chief who directed operations of heavily-armed secret police teams against Kurds and Turkish Leftist organisations, a famous fascist whom the police pretended to catch for many murders committed by himself in the past and was at the time working with the secret police and had contacts with the mafia, and an actress died inside the car. The car belonged to an MP from the ruling party—the DYP—who was rescued with heavy injuries. He was the leader of a Kurdish tribe whose members were armed against the PKK guerrillas. The Susurluk scandal disclosed the fact that secret gangs are organised by the State itself.

¹³ There are also anti-militarist organisations and campaigns such as İzmir War Resisters (İSK); Anti-Militarist Initiative (Istanbul); Initiative for Resisters of Violence (Istanbul); Conscientious Objectors' Initiative (Köln); Campaign against Military Service, Compulsory Military Service and Militarism (Berlin); Campaign against Compulsory Military Service in Turkey (ZAK-Firari, London); and Don't Join the Army!.

¹⁴ Although we are against all forms of nationalism and the politics of the PKK leadership, we refuse to describe this organisation as "terrorist," as the State and the media would like to describe it.

¹⁵ The Turkish Republic established itself also with the blood and tears of Greeks from Anatolia. The militia of the Ankara government massacred thousands of Pontic Greeks in the Blacksea region and thousands of Greeks in the Aegean region during the national war. Also, the Turkish State provoked the people to rise against Armenians and Greeks in Istanbul in September 1956, at the end of which their homes and shops were either looted or destroyed.

Feminism in Turkey

by Mine Ege

IN STUDYING the women's liberation movement and feminism in Turkey, it is worthwhile to browse through the recent past. Why did feminism materialise in Turkey in the 1980s and not in the 1960s when the second fad of feminism rose in the West? In trying to answer these questions, I shall elaborate more on the political developments as far as the nature of the article allows me. I shall also look at the main changes in the women's movement of the 1990s in relation to the past.

The women's movement in Turkey has, in fact, very deep historical roots. It is known for a fact that at the end of the 19th century, especially during the Second Constitutional regime period (1908),¹ there were several women's associations and they published daily papers.² During this period when the Ottoman bourgeoisie promoted modernist movements, it would be futile to comment that Ottoman middle class women were unaware of the Suffragette movement influential in the West.

Following the National War,³ the privileges granted to women (Civil Law 1926; the right to vote 1934; equal rights with men in public life 1935) from those in power pursuant to the Kemalist reforms, which were initiated with the establishment of the new state (1923) and which promoted westernisation, had placed women on the same footing in legal terms. The Turkish Women Association with its roots in the women's movements of the Ottoman period and based on women's free will, though it was pro-

moted by middle class women, had acknowledged Kemalism because of the rights awarded to women until then by Kemalism.⁴ It considered "state feminism" satisfactory and abolished itself to be replaced by certain women's associations administered directly by the Kemalist state. In other words, educated working women were symbols of modern Turkey for Kemalist republicans.

The privileges enjoyed by the middle class women of the Republican period were not enjoyed by women of other classes and sections of the society. Pastoralism and patriarchal relationships were dominant and those who enjoyed these rights in any real sense formed only a small percentage of the urban minority. Naturally, this minority compromised with Kemalism, due to the privileges they acquired, and questioned neither the sexism of Civil Law (man is the head of family; woman is deprived of her rights of inheritance; woman may not work without her husband's permission; woman who commits adultery is subject to more severe punishments etc.) nor patriarchal relationships. They did not wear the veil and they were "liberated" women who could become pilots, doctors, or teachers. With this point of view, they must have thought that others too would be liberated through secularism, civilisation, education, and westernisation on the path Kemalism advised. As a result of all these and as a negative development, the liberal women's movement that had begun at the Ottoman period and based on the initiative of women ended due to the Kemalist intervention.

On the other hand, the privileges Kemalism had awarded, although they were simply granted with no strife, had the following advantage as far as the liberal feminist movement which would develop later on was concerned: the fact that Kemalism, as distinct from other Middle Eastern and Arab countries, granted equal rights to women paved the way for the feminist movement in Turkey, which emerged in the 1980s and enabled the movement to attack patriarchal man-woman relationships and patriarchal establishments directly. This development led feminism in Turkey after the 1980s to formulate a universal language on ideal platforms.

Turkey of the 1960s and 1970s

The 1968 student movement in the West was a general attack on conventional establishments and institutions including orthodox Marxist organisations, ideology, and institutions, as well as being against the rising new capitalist market economy and imperialism. It is because of this that this movement bore in its nature the black movement and the second fad feminist movement (Women's Liberation Movement).

In Turkey, however, although the student movement bore significant resemblance with the student movement of the West, it had certain basic differences. The main theme of the student movement in Turkey was anti-imperialism. When the youth counting on the Kemalist past and the Kemalist military intervention of 27 May 1960⁵ took a stance against the hegemony of American imperialism over Turkey, it joined forces with Kemalism and certain State institutions that it could utilise against imperialism (the slogan of "army and youth hand

in hand") rather than attacking all establishments and ideologies that exist in society. It was natural that such a heavily nationalist movement which viewed women as "mothers of the nation" would not accommodate feminism within itself.

However, at the dawn of the 1970s, a radical Left owing its roots and its leaders to the '68 movement started forming apart from the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) and the Republican People's Party (CHP). This Leftist movement based its ideology on Marxism-Leninism. Even though it was divided into several fractions and organisations, this was the common basis. The movement had significant ideological influence in the society in general. Even the military *coup d'état* of 12 March 1971 could not terminate this development.⁶ Due to the ideological influence of the Left effective even after 1974⁷ and losing effect with the intervention of 12 September 1980,⁸ women took part in this Leftist movement and became militants of various Leftist organisations. Both due to the conventional anti-feminist character of Marxism and due to the "class problem" being adopted by Marxist organisations as the essential problem and diffusing all other problems into the class problem by linking all conflicts to the former, "secondary problems like the women issue" were never brought to the fore. Women who individually voiced this problem were suspected of insufficient "faith and devotion in the revolution" and were excommunicated. Some of the Marxist-Leninist organisations did of course delve into certain formations under the name "women's studies," but the main aim of these studies was to make the concerned organisations appealing to women. During the same period, the Leftist movement had conformed with patriarchal ideologies and establishments in order to "unite with the people."⁹

Feminism in the 1980s

After the military coup of 12 September 1980, the ideological hegemony of Marxism was broken and the idea of making a revolution with leading Leftist organisations lost its attraction. This situation caused the people who had fought for these organisations until then partly to retrieve and partly to strive for new goals. While these new struggles were relatively satisfied by the civil socialism that emerged in the medium of ideological conflict of the times, we women, who could not place our second rate status on the agenda and our restraints in the organisations before 1980 regardless of how strongly we felt about it, started questioning our female status first individually and then by forming small groups. We realised during our discussions together that the situations we had assumed to have experienced and sensed personally were in fact consequences of our common female status. We were militants in the Leftist organisations of the 1970s and could only survive in these organisations by leaving our female identity behind. "... because woman is considered 'hazardous' just like alcoholic drinks, gambling and drugs, the Left has imposed the 'sister' (bacı) cliché as a solution to protect itself from this danger. 'Sister' was the type of 'female comrade' whose sexuality and individuality was suppressed. With the formulation of 'all my love is to my people, all women are my sisters,' male militants tried to avoid the 'discord' element called 'woman,' who could disrupt the revolutionist union and solidarity."¹⁰

Especially we, women having a Leftist background, refrained from calling ourselves feminist openly. This is probably because we still had some sort of a relationship with our organisational circles and we were not very clear on this subject. However, we felt

close to feminism and this consciousness gradually developed at each stage. On the other hand, a group of women who called themselves feminist spoke out for the first time in public with the symposium on "feminism," organised by *Yazko* and that took place at the Journalists' Association. The women's page in the *Somut* magazine followed this in 1983. This formation called itself the Women's Group by 1984. In addition, the feminist literature had been published since 1981. By the middle of the 1980s, other women's associations were formed. The Thursday Group in Ankara, the Women's Association against Discrimination-Sexism in Istanbul, the *Kaktüs* (Cactus) magazine, the *Feminist* magazine and a group of women in İzmir... Women joined together in these groups on the basis of heartfelt solidarity, and they began organising themselves in opposition to the practices of centralisation and individual leadership. They were exercising an autonomous style that did not agree with the centralised and hierarchical habits of the Left they had adopted until then. This was a radical, pluralist, movement from below. Women organised themselves on their own initiative and without the manipulation of any organisation or party. For example, some of us questioned violence in the family, while some joined in solidarity with the striking women in a leather factory in Kazlıçeşme. It was observed in practice that these two different actions, rather than being obstructive, reinforced each other.

The Other World

The feminist movement had started voicing itself widely in all fragments of society. One of the main subjects of in-house gatherings and visits was feminism. Men tried to dismiss the topic with jokes, saying in a semi-embarrassed tone that they helped

with housework. It was possible to see articles and discussions on feminism in the media during those times, even though these were usually somewhat critical.

Leftist and intellectual men agreed that there was indeed a “woman problem.” But this did not concern them. Certain “backward elements” did make mistakes like this. And was it not Marx and Engels who brought the matter up for the first time anyway? What was the explanation of this separatism, this segregation in following different goals? It was especially dangerous to pursue bourgeois trends like feminism. The matter should have been taken in its entirety and should not have caused separation within the proletarian class. Why did women organise separately? It was their fault if women did not attend organisation meetings, although they were invited to them. And was it not yet another discrimination not to allow men in women’s associations and meetings? What was the explanation of this “harem” attitude? The working women never had a

problem. A Leftist group attending the 8 March demonstrations in 1989 tried to suppress our voice with the slogan “Men and women together, for a free future.”

The discussion that took place upon women in Leftist organisations, their being influenced by feminism and their bringing the topic on the agenda forced the Left to surrender to the “feminism trouble.” However, to compensate for this, it was hoped that the path of the women’s movement under the name of “women’s liberation studies” could be diverted and the movement could be taken under control. It was important not to divert from the real objective, and thus we were invited to an association which encompassed the women’s strife but took the struggle for socialism as its basis. Organisations tried to contextualise this with the formula that claims “the prerequisite for women’s liberation is socialism.” However, it seemed that due to these crucial struggles, our turn would never come. They had the wisdom of everything and every-

thing had to be under their control. Like the mayor of Ankara, Mr. Tandoğan who said that “communism can rule this country only through us,” they claimed that feminism would come through Marxists. These Leftist organisations are able to give any kind of self-criticism. Yet they are so male dominated in nature that they are unaware of the methods they use to suppress and oppress women within themselves.

Women on the Streets

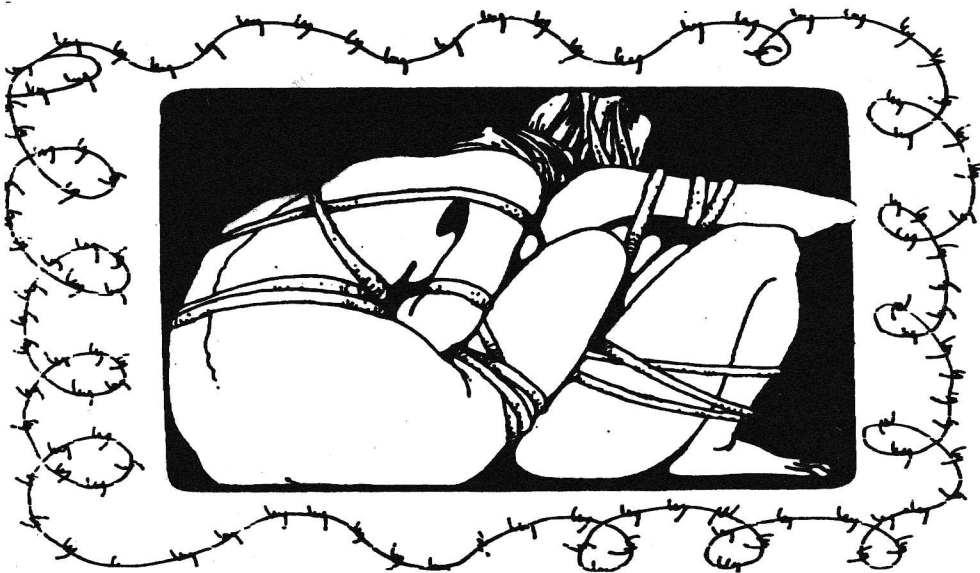
The *coup d’état* of 12th September 1980 meant silencing all mass organisations and institutions as well as the Marxist Left. In those days, one could not see a single person who was involved with the Leftist movement and was not subjected to the rage of the military regime. Of course, as in all wars, women paid a heavy price. As well as being prosecuted as individual political subjects, they also carried the secondary burden of being mothers, wives, lovers and sisters. It was quite common to see women’s silent protests outside prison gates or court doors. Women of every age group came together as a result of our common destiny. Daughters, sons, or lovers were persecuted or lost. Consequently, women were the anonymous heroines of the fight for freedom and the leading platoon against torture and oppression. They were harassed and abused just for hoping for some news at court doors and prison visits. On the other hand, life was not at all easy for us at home. In police raids (with or without permit) even our dowry chests were searched and as if that was not enough, we were blamed for our fertility. Because we were the mothers of the “communist/anarchist villains.” Even the wombs of the mothers of these separatist enemies of the State were guilty.

One of these women was Didar Şensoy,

who lost her life because of a police officer’s kick in front of the National Assembly during the boycotts and hunger strikes against the fascist regime. In later years, the eleven feminist women were arrested when protesting over the deaths at Nigde Prison. The fact that the Left in Turkey preferred not to notice these struggles and the women who formed the women’s liberation movement and who took part in these struggles that they called the feminism after 1980 “Eylülist”¹¹ shows how narrow-minded they were. “...on looking back at the start of 1982, it could be argued that the feminist movement formed the most democratic and the leading—in many aspects—wing of the democratic opposition against the military intervention of 1980 and that they served an essential function in the society’s search for democracy.”¹²

In 1986, the petition campaign requesting that the International Agreement on Women, which was also confirmed by the Turkish Republic as well be put into force brought women of various levels of the society together again. This was followed in 1987 by the Solidarity Campaign Against Beating after an order by a judge in Çankırı legitimised a husband beating his wife, claiming “Kids and smacks are what every woman needs regularly.” A demonstration protesting against beating women took place on 17 May 1987, called by the Women’s Association Against Discrimination, Socialist-Feminist Women, and Feminist Magazine. More than a thousand women took part.

Even though the demonstration took place on a Sunday, it attracted many people’s attention who were watching besides the journalists’. A group of about thirty Leftist men who wanted to walk with us followed a few metres behind the walking convoy with their children on their shoul-



ders, expressing their support. It was possible to see women from every section of society in the demonstration. The subject of beating within the family had united us. There was not a single woman among us who did not get her share of beating. Our signs and mottos were very colourful and the colour purple formed the main theme. As we walked singing songs we composed, the sight of women who clapped at us as they watched us from their balconies was quite sad. Because it was Sunday, fathers and husbands were at home and women who could not attend the walk, although they were very enthusiastic to do so, could still wave at us behind their husbands who lathered shaving cream on their faces as they closed the windows. We were addressing them with slogans like "women gather here, for solidarity," "we don't want a heaven of beating,"¹³ "harassment to one is harassment to all." The fury that had silently accumulated for many years was expressed in the song "We are rising for the unjust centuries gone by, say it loud and clear we are women."



The campaign was one of the first examples of various groups of women acting together, even though they were very diverse and were not centrally organised. This was followed by the Kariye Museum Fest. Later on, there were the small meetings and 8 March demonstrations at the kahve's¹⁴ of Istanbul which we called Feminist picnics. Meanwhile, following the demonstration against beating, women had found the courage to voice this subject out loud. The big-

gest need of women attending the meetings and joining the associations was that they had nowhere to go. Because of this, many women still had to go back to the cradle of violence. Due to this immediate need, the subject of a women's shelter was brought on the agenda. However, there were various obstacles standing in the way of this project: 1. The societal and the legal structure where beating and especially beating in the family was considered legitimate. 2. The fact that we women made up the lowest group financially in income distribution and the hierarchical division of labour in a male-dominated society.

By 1989, the feminist movement was split within itself as well as at war with the outside world. A three-day Feminist Weekend meeting at which more than a hundred women attended took place in Ankara in 1989. Different problems of feminism were discussed and at the end of this meeting, a declaration of the "Our Bodies Belong to Us" campaign was published. In the spring of the same year, the First Women's Congress took place where feminists and women from various Leftist organisations met. Again in the autumn of 1989, protests regarding article 438 which was inspired by Mussolini's Italy and exercised without question were brought on the agenda. The said article gives a punishment discount to the abusing male at the rate of 2/3 if the raped woman is a prostitute. I believe the fact that the 11 male Judges of Constitutional Court did not consider this article to contravene the equality principle of

the Constitution reveals yet another example of the standards of universal male justice.

Feminism in the 1990s

The radical emergence of the women's liberation movement in the 1980s began to bear fruit in the early 1990s: the "purple shelter" campaign was initiated in order to provide refuge to women who were being subjected to violence. Also there were clear victories such as the establishment of the Library of Works by Women. More importantly, although in one sense the women's movement was fragmenting, feminist ideas did continue to spread to wider sections of the society. Feminists identified men's violence against women at home as a crime and challenged the Islamic values. These issues were discussed publicly for the first time.

Women who play prominent roles in today's social and political struggles are able to retain their position only because of the influence of the women's liberation movement of the 1980s. However, it seems as if some of them, instead of trying to take the women's movement forward, are more content to stagnate, and delute the radical ideas of the past into mainstream reformist politics. For example, they call women to join political parties in the name of women's politics. But in the past, even if somebody involved herself in a Leftist organisation or party, she was not considered to be a true feminist. In the past women in the movement rejected to establish links with any political parties. But today some feminists of position are very willing to join them. Are not political parties male dominated and sexist, authoritarian and patriarchal? Do they not exclude women from positions of decision-making? Are not they the champions of

patriarchal laws? Are not they the representatives of the system which makes legal all forms of violence, discrimination, and oppression against women? In the past we rejected all forms of representation. Now do we cherish the hope that the corrupt parliamentary system will change our lives? In the past when we cried out "we don't want a heaven of beating," our voice was loud and clear. Now we remain silent when the "Saturday Mothers" gather around the Galatasaray avenue to protest against the police violence; we remain silent when Kurdish women are oppressed under the double burden of sexism and racism; and we remain silent when the secular nationalist-Kemalist dictatorship allows the police to beat Muslim female students, who are excluded from university education because they *choose* to veil themselves. In the past we always took the side of women who were beaten, discriminated against, and excluded etc., regardless of their social background and nationality, political and religious *beliefs*, and so on. Now they take the side of women candidates for parliamentary elections, regardless of their political affiliations. Those women who rise to power on a feminist platform became sucked into the system, and fail to use their position to the advantage of other women.

Many of us will remember George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. At the end of the book, we read: "the creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which."¹⁵ If we compare the women's movement in the past—what we intended to achieve in the 1980s—with what is happening today, it is impossible to see any connection. It is inevitable that one who decides to join in a political game becomes like his/her opponents.

1 The Second Constitution regime was performed under the leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress who argued that the Ottoman totalitarian regime should be turned into a constitutional one. Together with this change, the step taken with the First Constitution (1876) was completed and the totalitarian regime of the Sultan was restricted by the constitutional Union and Progress government.

2 See Şirin Tekeli (ed.), *Kadın Bakışaısından Kadınlar (Women in the Eyes of Women)*, 2nd edition, Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 1993, p.30.

3 The Ottoman Empire took part in the First World War, siding with Germany by the urge of the Union and Progress government, and was occupied by the Entente Powers after being defeated. A national war was waged under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk to counter this occupation and, following the victory of the National War, the Ottoman Empire was eradicated and the Turkish Republic was established.

4 The concept, *Kemalism*, takes its name from the founder of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk. It is used to define the bourgeois, republican, and reformist ideology of Atatürk.

5 The military intervention of 27 May 1960 made against the government of Menderes-Bayar enabled a Constitution that allowed for relatively more freedom compared to the latter military interventions; the medium this act formed caused the Leftist movement which existed in secrecy until then to be disclosed before the masses on legal platforms.

6 The military intervention of 12 March dismissed the government of the Justice Party (AP), which was led by Süleyman Demirel, the current Prime Minister of Turkey of their ruling duty. The intervention was executed by the Generals leading the army, with the aim of suppressing the developing mass movements

and the Left which was involved in armed attacks. This intervention "pruned" the Constitution that was put in force in 27 May.

7 In 1973, the military gave up its claim to rule the country and permitted the elections. When Ecevit, the representative of the Left of the centre was elected, the militants and staff of the Left movement in prison were released by the pardon proclaimed in 1974.

8 The military intervention of 12 September which again dismissed Süleyman Demirel's government was carried out by the Generals leading the army who benefited from the reluctant medium of the times caused by the many deaths that resulted due to conflicts between the Left and the Right and among different sects. Following this intervention, an act of suppression that had not been so dense even at the 12 March period took place and many people were tortured. The leaders of 12 September totally annulled the Constitution of 27 May and replaced it instead with the Constitution of their oppressive regime.

9 See Fatmagül Berktaş, "Türkiye Solu'nun Kadına Bakışı," (How the Left in Turkey views women), in *Kadın Bakışaısından Kadınlar*, op.cit. pp. 313-326.

10 Fatmagül Berktaş, *ibid.* p.316.

11 "Eylülist" is a term used by the Left in Turkey meaning those who supported the coup d'état of 12 September and those who benefited from this intervention.

12 Şirin Tekeli, *op.cit.* p.33.

13 There is a Turkish proverb which in essence means beating is done with good intentions and would lead one to heaven.

14 "Kahve" is a cafeteria where men get together for leisure entertainment like chatting and playing backgammon.

15 George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, London, Longman, 1960, p.88.

