

Lêgerîn

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Editorial

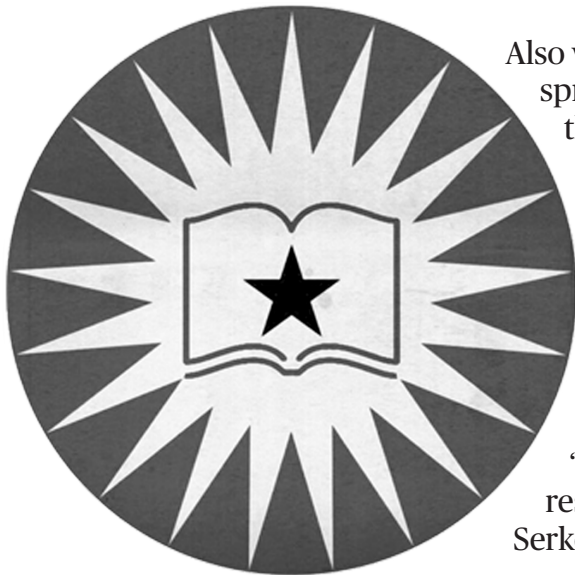
Merhaba hevalno,

we are happy to bring you the fourth edition of our internationalist magazine. As you can see we have been rethinking and re-organizing “Lêgerîn”. First of all as you have noticed we have a new design and we hope you will enjoy it as much as we do. Besides the design our network is constantly growing, more and more friends are joining us in the works of “Lêgerîn”. Translation and correction commission have been setted up for the different languages. Any kind of support or help for this work are welcome.

As we will add a german version of “Lêgerîn” german speaker are welcome to get in touch with us to join our translation/correction groups. To speak concretely we need friend who can translate/correct texts in spanish, english, french, portuguese or german.

Another part of “Lêgerîn” as being significantly growing is the printing commissions who have been organised in many part of the world and especially in Aby Yala. You now can find physical version of the magazine in : Brazil, Euskal Heria, Mexico, Costa-Rica, Argentina, France, USA and some more will be available soon.

As some of you already know we have been organising webconferences with different collectives around the world to talk about the situation of the revolution in Middle-East and Kurdistan and/or to talks about our revolutionaries practices and ideology. We are very happy to do so and/or participate in debates you may organize regarding our struggle for freedom. Feel free to contact us if you want to organize something similar in your region.



Also we have been joining the different campaign to support and spread the revolution in Kurdistan as the spring offensive from the Riseup4Rojava and WomenDefendRojava networks. We encourage you to do the same starting by following them on social media and taking action in the streets in the frame of the campaigns.

Still we invite our artist friends to send us your artworks we will use them for our social media and for the magazine

With all of this we hope you will enjoy the new edition of “Lêgerîn” and send to you our revolutionnary greetings and respects.
Serkeftin to all of you.

Contact: **legerinkovar@protonmail.com**

Reddit, Instagram y Twitter: **@RevistaLegerin**



Internationalists perspectives

April 2021



In the history of revolutions we can always find internationalists who today allow us to write internationalism with a temporal depth. The feeling of brotherhood, the feeling of belonging to one and the same humanity is not something new. In the 21st century the examples are innumerable, because the phenomenon has been documented a lot. The Russian Revolution, the Spanish War, the Cuban Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, etc. all demonstrate that revolutionary solidarity is a tool for the freedom of peoples, that it is the main bridge between human beings.

Even if after the collapse of real socialism, the revolutionary faith has lost momentum and strength. Today internationalism is once again participating in the construction and establishment of a world revolution. The current situation of revolutionary experiences in the 21st century gives hope to all revolutionaries around the globe. The sharing of experience, mutual support and revolutionary education of each other is achieved through what can be called a modern internationalism.

At the present time, internationalists can be found in various revolutionary struggles all over the world, on all continents. In some of these struggles, as here in Kurdistan, internationalists have created revolutionary structures that are dedicated to the potentialization of this force, to the construction of

this bridge between peoples. As internationalists in Kurdistan we are developing the tools that allow us to spread the revolutionary spirit throughout the world. We are developing a network that goes beyond “humanitarian” solidarity, seizing the opportunity that the Kurdish movement and the revolutionaries of the Middle East have offered us to improve our revolutionary practice. It is our historical responsibility to be where the struggle for the liberation of humanity, the struggle to bring down the capitalist and patriarchal system, is played out. It is our role to go and learn and be trained where the revolution is taking place.

It is not a question of closing our eyes to other revolutionary experiences in progress, on the contrary, moving physically outside our respective countries allows us to meet revolutionaries from all over the world, but above all to have a necessary perspective on the struggles in our regions. In the long run, we believe it is necessary to rethink methods of coordinating internationalists throughout the world, and thus amplify the impact of our individual experiences to make them a collective legacy.

The creation of an internationalist movement is our goal. Building militant links between revolutionary movements is an indispensable step toward the abolition of capitalism. Defending revolutionary experiences and learning from them is the best way to strengthen our struggles and weaken the system. Unity is strength. The experiences of the past centuries testify to this. Despite mistakes and defeats, the capitalists have never trembled as much as in the days of the Comintern, the Bandung or the Tricontinental. Nowadays, the creation of concrete links and training are our main priorities.

The struggle is not over

Despite the narrative of the patriarchal and capitalist system, the struggle for socialism and the liberation of humanity has not been defeated and eliminated. Social struggles and even armed struggles have never been so present. The fascism of the nation-states and the capitalists are kept in check. The peoples in resistance are every day more numerous and better organized. We are on the side of those who resist.

As recently in Kurdistan the resistance in the free mountains of the region of Garê were a failure for the Turkish fascism and its neo-Ottoman colonial plans. Victory is at hand for the revolutionaries who develop an effective resistance practice. The PKK through the guerrilla forces of the HPG and YJA-Star have demonstrated once again that fascism is a man and can therefore be defeated. However, the victory in Garê is not a final victory and the resistance must continue, the threats of the fascist AKP-MHP state are still alive, the pressure is increasing on Shengal and on the North-East of Syria (Rojava). Also there as in Garê the resistance is organized. The revolutionary people's war is being set up, the population is preparing to defend its hard-won freedom.

In parallel, we internationalists have gone on the offensive. Through the Riseup4ojava campaign we participate in the "spring offensive" to denounce and sabotage the war machine of the dictator Erdogan and his fascist government. And we will continue to prevent by all necessary means the Turkish neo-ottoman colonialism from achieving its goals. Join the struggle against Turkish fascism, connect with the Riseup4ojava network and/or WomenDefendRojava create your regional committee, take action!

Also we cannot defend Rojava and the revolution in Kurdistan without talking about and defending Abdullah Öcalan. Those who choose to ignore the role of Reber Apo and the PKK in the revolution in Kurdistan are making a serious mistake tinged with orientalism and racism. They miss the most important legacy of this historic struggle for the revolutionaries. Without Öcalan and the PKK there would simply be no revolution in Kurdistan. It is his life path, his philosophy and his struggle that generated the revolution that today inspires millions of people around the world. It is necessary to study his thought and his life to begin to overcome the eurocentric and petty bourgeois reflexes that push Westerners to take only what suits them in liberation struggles abroad.

Öcalan has dedicated his entire life to the struggle. For his commitment and the threat he poses to the hegemonic capitalist system, he became the target of an international conspiracy that led to his arrest

by the American and Israeli secret services, who then delivered him to the Turkish fascist regime. It is for his ideas that he was sentenced to death and has been kept for more than 22 years in solitary confinement on Imrali prison island. His status as a political prisoner makes him a symbol for all those who fight for democracy throughout the world.

22 years of torture by the Turkish colonial state for claiming the right to exist of the Kurdish people.

22 years of torture for daring to think and organize a concrete alternative to the capitalist system.

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More than ever we demand his immediate release. Revolution is not a walk in the park, it is not a hobby. Revolutionaries of all kinds must be aware of their responsibilities and the tasks at hand. We have to overcome the contradictions of capitalist modernity, we have to be not only an opposition to the system but above all those who bring solutions.

Our role is to develop the alternative, to build the revolutionary life. For this it is necessary to study and practice a revolutionary life. There is no secret that it is impossible to develop a free personality and therefore to have a revolutionary life within the patriarchal and capitalist system. We cannot liberate society without liberating ourselves. It is essential to break with the routine of life imposed by the system, to break with the capitalist sociability.

Comrades, get out of your routine, get out of the system. It is time to live, it is time to resist. The world is waiting for you, the history of liberation will not be written without you.

Join the revolution now!

To all of you, revolutionary greetings and respects

Internationalist Commune (Rojava April 2021)



The question of freedom

by Abdullah Öcalan

Sociology of freedom

I almost want to say freedom is the goal of the universe. I have often asked myself if the universe is not, in fact, in pursuit of freedom. The formulation of freedom as a profound quest unique to human society always seemed incomplete to me, and I thought there must definitely be an aspect related to the universe. When I think of the particle-energy duality that is the cornerstone of universe, I would without hesitation emphasize that energy is freedom. I believe that the material particle is an imprisoned packet of energy. Light is a state of energy. Can we deny how freely light can flow? If quanta are defined as smallest particles of energy, then we must also agree that they are now seen to explain almost all diversity. Yes, quantum motion is the creative power of all diversity. I cannot resist asking whether this is the God that humanity has been searching for all along. When they say the supra-universe is of quantum character, I again get excited and feel that this could well be. Again, as I said a moment ago, I can't help wondering if this is what has been called "the external creativity of God."

I think it is important not to be selfish when it comes to freedom and not to fall into reductionism that restricts freedom to humans. Can it be denied that the flutter of the bird in a cage is a flutter for freedom? What other concept could explain the twitter of a nightingale in a cage, more beautiful than any symphony, but the desire for freedom? If we go a step further, don't all of the sounds and colors of the universe make us think of freedom? Can the struggle of women, the first and last slaves, who have experienced the most profound slavery of human society, be explained by anything other than their quest for freedom? When a brilliant philosopher the Sociology of Freedom like Spinoza interprets freedom as a way out of ignorance and the power of intellect, isn't he saying the same thing?

I don't want to suffocate the problem in infinite detail, nor do I want to portray the situation as one

of being convicted from birth. Apart from a few lines I scribbled in memory of Prometheus, I have never tried to write a poem, which in a way is also a quest for freedom, even one that has only an imaginary meaning. Nonetheless, is there any denying that I am passionately searching for the meaning of freedom?

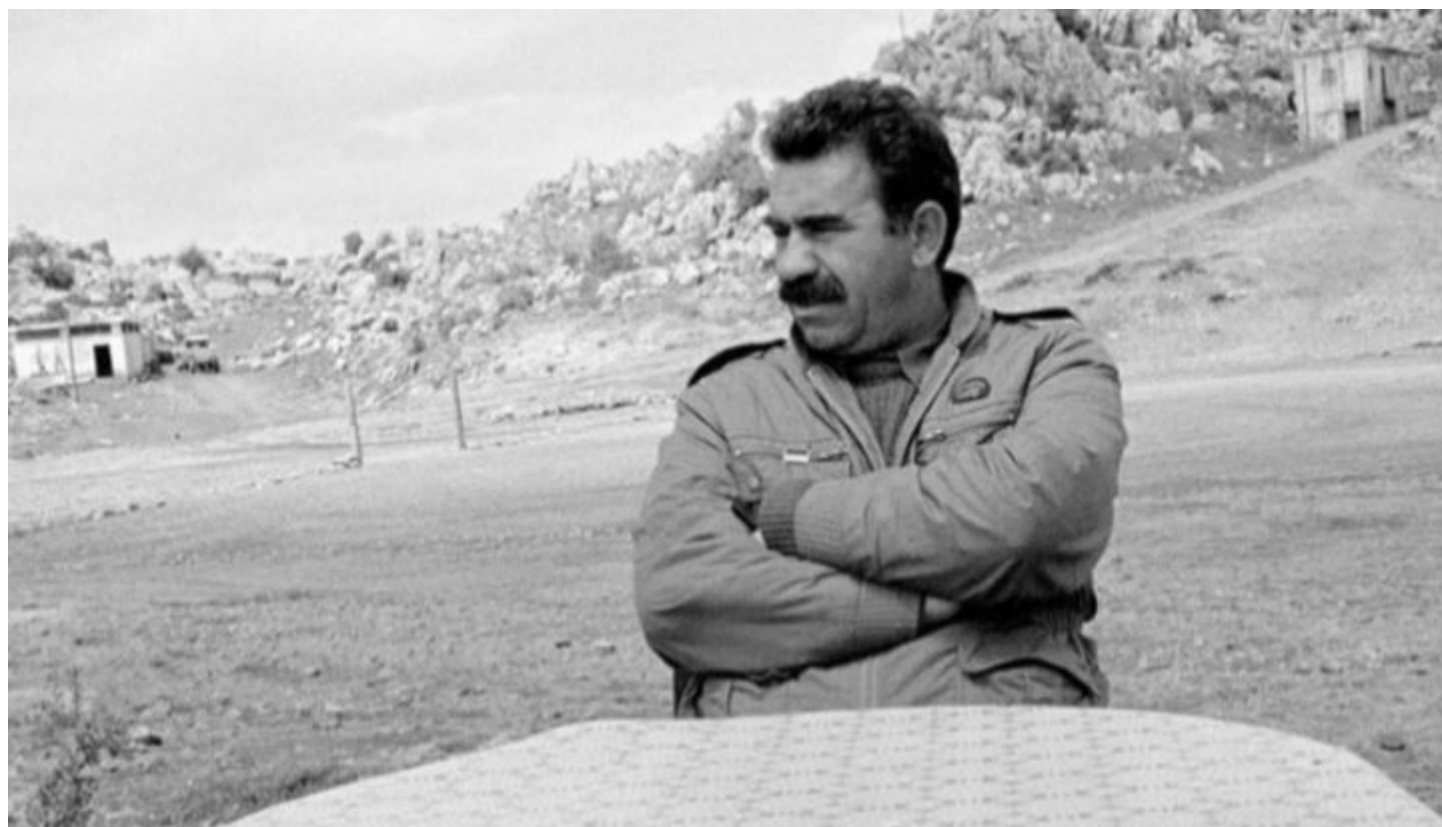
As we problematize social freedom, this short introduction is meant to draw attention to the depth of the issue. Defining society as the nature with the most developed and concentrated intelligence also contributes to the analysis of freedom. The areas where intelligence is concentrated are areas sensitive to freedom. It is fair to say that the more developed the intelligence, culture, and reason of a society, the more that society will be inclined to freedom. Yet it is also true to say that the more a society deprives itself or has been deprived of these values, the more it is enslaved. When I think about the tribe of the Hebrews, two characteristics and survival strategies always come to mind. The first is a special relationship to making money. Jews sought financial influence at certain times and at times attained worldwide supremacy. This is the material side. However, I think it is more important that they master the second, i.e. the art of influence in the intellectual field, even better. Jews have achieved an outstanding intellectual and cultural position, first with their prophets and later with their scribes, then in capitalist modernity with their philosophers, scholars, and artists, with roots that go back almost as far back as written history. This is why I propose the hypothesis that there is no other tribe that is as rich and free as the Hebrews. Some examples of the situation of the Jews in recent times will confirm this. Many influential people in the field of financial capital, which dominates the global economy, have Hebrew roots and are, therefore, Jewish. If we mention names like Spinoza in the emergence of contemporary philosophy, Marx in sociology, Freud in psychology, and Einstein in physics, and add hundreds of theorists of the arts, science, and political theory, we would get a sufficient impression of Jewish intellectual strength. Can the dominance of the Jews in the world of intellect be denied?

But there is also the other side of the coin, the Others of the world. The material and immaterial wealth, power, and dominance of one side is realized at the expense of the poverty and weakness of the Others, as well as their transformation into a herd. Therefore, Marx's famous statement about the proletariat: "If the proletariat wants to liberate itself, it has no choice but to liberate the whole society" also applies to the Jews, almost as if Marx had thought of them when formulating it. If the Jews want to ensure their freedoms—i.e., their wealth, intelligence and power of understanding they have no choice but to enrich and immaterially strengthen world society in a similar way. Otherwise, they could be persecuted by new Hitlers at any time. In this sense, the liberation of the Jews is only possible if it is intertwined with the liberation and freedom of world society. There should be no doubt that this is the most noble task of the Jews, who have already achieved a great deal for humanity. We can also learn from the terrible genocide of the Jews that wealth and immaterial prestige based on the poverty and ignorance of others contribute no real value to freedom. Freedom in a true sense is the transcendence of the distinction between us and others that is characterized by being available to be shared by everyone.

When we evaluate the central civilization system on the basis of freedom, we see that there is an increasingly multifaceted slavery. Slavery is primarily sustained in three ways. First, ideological slavery is constructed. The construction of frightening and dominating mythological gods

is very striking and easy to grasp, especially in Sumerian society. The upper floor of the ziggurat is considered the location of the gods that dominate the mind. The middle floors are the headquarters of the priests' political administration. The lowest floor, on the other hand, is the floor of the craftspeople and agricultural workers responsible for all aspects of production. This model has not changed in any significant way until this day but has, in fact, expanded and spread widely. This five-thousand-year-old narrative of the central civilization system provides the historical concept that comes closest to the truth; more precisely, it is empirically observed reality. Analyzing the ziggurat is equivalent to correctly analyzing the central civilization system and, thus, the current capitalist world system. One side of the coin is the continuous and cumulative development of capital and power, while, on the other, we find terrible slavery, hunger, poverty, and herdlike behavior.

This can help us to better understand the profundity of the question of freedom. The central civilization system cannot survive and maintain itself without gradually depriving society of its freedom and ensuring that society behaves in a herdlike fashion. The solution within the system's logic is to create more apparatuses of capital and power. This, in turn, means society will be even more impoverished and herdlike. The fact that the question of freedom grew to the degree that it became the fundamental question faced by every age is the result of the dichotomous nature of the system. We have used



the example of the Jewish tribe, because it is highly instructive. Examining both freedom and slavery from the point of view of Jewish history is no less important now than it was in the past.

We can also better understand the traditional debate about whether money or consciousness provides more freedom in the light of this narrative. As long as money is an instrument for capital accumulation, for usurping surplus product and surplus value, it will always be an instrument of slavery. The fact that it even invites the massacre of its owners shows us that money cannot be a reliable instrument for achieving freedom. Money plays the role of the particle of matter, the opposite of energy.

In this respect, consciousness is always closer to freedom. Consciousness about reality always expands the horizons of freedom. This is why consciousness is always described as the flow of energy. Defining freedom as pluralization, diversification, and differentiation in the universe will make it easier to explain social morality. Pluralization, diversification, and differentiation, even if only implicitly, are suggestive of the inherent ability of an intelligent being to make choices. Scientific research confirms that plants have an intelligence that leads them to diversify. Humans have yet to replicate the formations in a living cell in a laboratory. Perhaps we cannot talk about universal intelligence (Geist) as Hegel did, but, still, it cannot be judged as total nonsense to talk about an intelligence-like being in the universe. We cannot explain differentiation in any other way than as the result of the existence of intelligence. Pluralization and diversification evoke freedom because of the sparks of intelligence that underlie them. As far as we know, the human being can be defined as the most intelligent being in the universe. But how did the human being attain this intelligence? I had already scientifically defined the human (physically, biologically, psychologically, and sociologically) as an epitome of the universal history. Here we further define the human being as the accumulation of universal intelligence. This is also why the human being is presented as a model of the universe in a number of philosophical schools of thought.

The level of intelligence and flexibility in human society is the real foundation of social construction. In this sense, it is also appropriate to define freedom as the force of social construction, or what has been called the moral attitude since the first human communities. Social morality is only possible with freedom. More precisely, freedom is the source of morality. Morality may be defined as the solidified

state of freedom, the tradition of freedom, or the code of freedom. If moral choice is based on freedom, when the connection between freedom and intelligence, consciousness, and reason is taken into consideration, it becomes clear why morality can be called the collective consciousness (conscience) of society. Calling theoretical morality ethics is only meaningful in this context. We cannot speak of an ethics that is not based on the morality of society. Undoubtedly, a more competent moral philosophy, i.e., ethics, could be derived from moral experiences, but there can be no artificial ethics. Immanuel Kant put a lot of thought into this subject, and it makes sense that he referred to practical reason as ethics. Kant's interpretation of morality as the choice and possibility of freedom remains valid today.

The connection between social politics and freedom is also apparent. The political sphere is the key area where farsighted minds collide intensely, focus the most, and strive to attain results. In a sense, it is also possible to define this area as the space where the participating subjects free themselves through the art of politics. Any society that does not promote and develop social politics needs to understand that this will rebound against them as a deprivation of freedom, and they will have to pay the price. It is in this sense that the supremacy of the art of politics emerges. Any society that fails to develop its politics (the clan, tribe, nation, class, and even power and state apparatuses) is doomed to failure. In fact, not being able to develop politics means not knowing your own conscience, vital interests, and identity. There cannot be a greater failure or loss for any society. Only when they stand up for their own interests, identity, and collective conscience—in other words, when they are engaged in political struggle—can it be said that such societies demand freedom. Demanding freedom in the absence of politics is a catastrophic error.

To not distort the relationship between politics and freedom, it is necessary to carefully determine how they differ from the politics (or, rather, the lack of politics) of power and the state and clearly distinguish them from it. Power and state apparatuses can have strategies and tactics, but in the true sense they have no politics. In any case, power and the state only come into existence when the denial of social politics is ensured. Wherever politics comes to an end, power and state structures are at work. Power and the state are the point where political word and, therefore, freedom ends. There is only dealing with the situation, obeying, and giving and taking orders; there are laws and statutes. All power and all states

represent frozen reason. Both their strength and their weakness arise from this quality. Hence, the spheres of power and the state are not areas where freedom can be sought or found. Hegel's statement that the state is the true sphere of freedom forms the basis of all of modernity's oppressive views and structures. Hitler's fascism is a good example of where this view can lead. In fact, even scientific socialism, with Marx and Engels as its masterminds, conceives of power and the state as fundamental means for socialist construction. This led them to—unknowingly—deliver the extreme blows to freedom and, thus, to equality. The liberals understood the truth behind “the more state, the less freedom” much better, and to this they owe their success.

Because of their nature, rulers and the state as instruments of domination do not signify anything but the surplus product and surplus values appropriated through coercion, i.e., a different variety of total capital. Capital creates the state, and the state creates capital. The same applies to any kind of power apparatus. Just as social politics breeds freedom, power and the state are spheres where freedom is lost. Power and state structures can perhaps make some individuals, groups, and nations richer and freer, but, as we have seen from the example of the Jews, this is only possible at the expense of poverty and slavery in other societies. The result has been all kinds of destruction, from wars to genocide. In the capitalist world system, politics suffered its greatest loss. It is possible to talk about the actual death of politics at the stage of capitalist modernity, which is the peak of the central civilization system. Therefore, today we are experiencing a political decline of incomparable proportions. While the decline of morality as an area of freedom is a phenomenon of our times, so is the decline of the political sphere. This is why if we want freedom we have no other choice but to use all of our intellectual power to find ways to restore and functionalize morality—the collective conscience of society—and politics—common reason—in all their aspects.

The relationship between freedom and democracy is even more complicated. There is a constant debate about which emerges from which. We can safely say that the intensity of their relationship means that they nurture one another. Just as we think of social politics in the context of freedom, we can also associate it with democracy. Social politics is at its most concrete as democratic politics. As such, democratic politics can be defined as the true

art of freedom. Without democratic politics, neither politicization nor freedom by political means is possible for society in general or for peoples and communities in particular. Democratic politics is the true school in which freedom is learned and lived. The more political work creates democratic subjects, the more democratic politics will politicize society, ultimately leading to freedom. If we accept politicization as the main form of freedom, we must understand that we free society by politicizing it and, simultaneously, we politicize society as we free it. There are, of course, many social spheres that nurture freedom and politics, most particularly various ideological sources, but basically social politics and freedom produce and nurture each other.

In general, the relationship between equality and freedom is confused. The relationship between the two is at least as complicated and problematic as their respective relationships with democracy. We note that when complete equality is achieved, the cost is paid in freedom. It is often suggested that they cannot coexist, and that it is necessary to make concessions in one area or the other. Some argue that concessions in the area of equality are necessary to achieve freedom.

It is necessary to explain the difference between the two concepts and, thus, the difference in nature of these phenomena, if we are to correctly address the problem. Equality is more of a legal concept. It foresees individuals and communities sharing the same rights regardless of their differences. However, diversity is not only a fundamental feature of the universe but also of society. Diversity is a concept that is closed to uniform rights. Equality can only be meaningful when it is based on differences. The main reason that the socialist understanding of equality failed to gain ground was that it did not take diversity into account, and this contributed greatly to its ultimate downfall.

True justice is only possible with an understanding of equality in diversity.

Once we understand that freedom is highly dependent on diversity, then a meaningful connection between equality and freedom can be established in the context of diversity. Reconciling freedom with equality is one of the main objectives of social politics.

We need to touch on the discussion between the

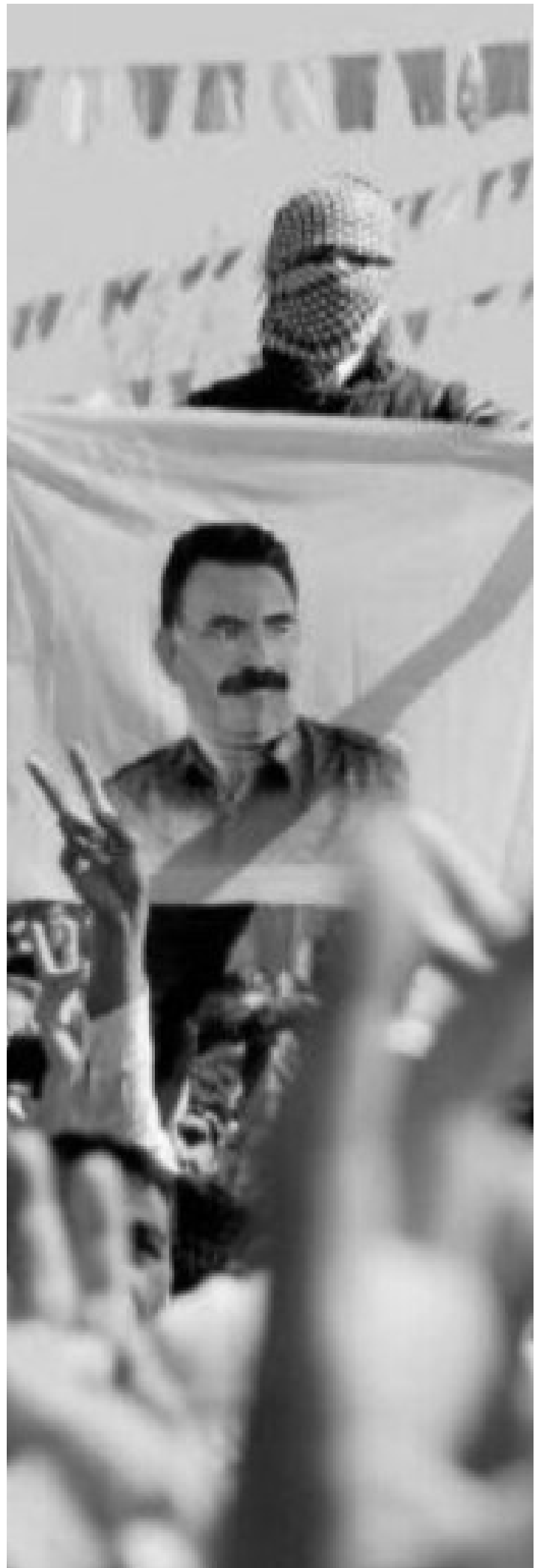
True justice is only possible with an understanding of equality in diversity.

advocates of individual freedom and the proponents of collective freedom. We need to explain the relationship between these two categories, defined by some as negative and positive freedom. Capitalist modernity promoted individual (negative) freedom at a great cost to social collectivity. It must be stressed that today individual freedom causes the decline of social politics as much as does the phenomenon of power. The crucial issue in a discussion about freedom is to clarify the role of individualism in the destruction of society, particularly in negating morality and politics. When we say that a society that is atomized by individualism does not have the strength to resist the apparatuses of capital and power, we can perhaps better understand the cancerous threat this poses for the social problem. Identifying liberal individualism as the main cause of the decline of social politics and freedom could possibly provide a meaningful way out. Of course, we are not talking about individuality or the necessity to be an individual.

What we are discussing is the role of the ideological idealization of individualism and liberalism that consumes social politics and freedom.

We have already discussed collective freedom. We must emphasize that freedom itself, like individualism, requires that every community (including tribes, peoples, nations, classes, occupational groups, etc.) define its identity, represent its interests, and take steps to guarantee its security. This is the only way for freedom to be meaningful. If individual and collective freedom can be reconciled in this way we will be able to talk about a successful and optimally free social order. Although defined as if they are opposites, the experience of the twentieth century has shown us that there is a strong similarity between the individualist freedom promoted by liberalism and the collectivist freedom promoted by real socialism. Both are liberal options. When we see how the games of statism and privatization are played by these two forces, the issues we are addressing here grow clearer.

Democratic society provides the most favorable ground for harmonizing individual and collective freedoms, something that has become particularly clear in the aftermath of the individualist (savage liberalism) and collectivist (pharaoh socialism) models that brought about such terrible destruction in the twentieth century. Arguably, democratic society is the most appropriate sociopolitical regime both for striking a balance between individual and collective freedoms and for achieving an understanding of equality in diversity.





Freedom for Öcalan:

The Harbinger of Peace in the Middle East

International Initiative | Sunday, February 14, 2021

Statement on the 22nd anniversary of Abdullah Öcalan's abduction

STATEMENTPRISON#FREEÖCALANFREETHEMALLABDULLAH ÖCALAN

The outrage about the abduction of Abdullah Öcalan from Nairobi, Kenya, in 1999, was the foundational moment for the International Initiative "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan–Peace in Kurdistan," which continues to campaign and to inform the public. With each year, the outrage about Öcalan's abduction and the demand for his freedom have grown, uniting people across continents.

Twenty-two years after Öcalan was abducted and handed over to Turkey, where he was subsequently sentenced to death in a show trial, one of the people who made it all possible is at the pinnacle of his career: Antony Blinken.

At the time of Öcalan's abduction, Blinken was special national security advisor to US President Bill Clinton. Although his exact role is unknown, in 2002, he revealed on Turkish television that it was the US that had delivered Öcalan to Turkey. Öcalan and the Kurdish Freedom Movement were clear that his abduction was part of an "international plot," the purpose of which was to remove an important obstacle to the policy of military interventions in the Middle East by the US and their allies. Today is a good day to take a look at what this plot entailed and what has resulted from it.

The Aftermath of the Abduction

We all know what ensued: a string of invasions and wars that helped further divide the already crisis-ridden societies and pitted the peoples of the Middle East against each other. This culminated in the genocidal attacks of the Islamic State. ISIS was largely a product of these interventionist policies. Thus, this plot was not only directed against Öcalan and the Kurds but against the entire region and its peoples.

Öcalan, on the other hand, time and again warned dangers inherent in this situation and presented suggestions and projects to overcome the national

and religious divides and create a new Middle East based on democracy rather than secular or religious nationalism. He called his efforts a project to "foil the international plot."

Öcalan has been consistently working against this plot, and every year, on 15 February, Kurds around the world remind us that this part of the plot failed. Today, Kurds are leading an effort to gather the peoples in the region together around an inclusive model of self-determination. The results of this are best visible in northeast Syria, a democratically governed area that is a beacon of hope for the wider region.

The USA, on the other hand, has continued on its course toward reshaping the Middle East according to its needs, militarily and through other forms of intervention. Perhaps it is nothing more than a quirk of fate that Antony Blinken, one of the architects of interventionism, whose role can be traced back to the Clinton administration, now has to deal with some of the disastrous results of these interventions.

In the meantime, Öcalan has deepened his project for peace and democracy. With his prison writings and his political interventions, he has become one of the most original and influential thinkers and interlocutors of the twenty-first century. Furthermore, the revolution in Rojava, hugely inspired by Öcalan's prison writings, has shown the world what the project of the Kurdish Freedom Movement is: peaceful coexistence, resolution of the conflicts between the peoples and nations of the Middle East, and women's freedom.

Inspiration

The anthropologist David Graeber, one of the great thinkers that we lost in the last year, emphasized this dimension in a text about Öcalan's quest for truth: "It's hard to find another theorist of the last fifty years who has taken philosophical and social scientific ideas and adopted them in such a way that he's been able to inspire millions of people to try to treat one another differently." (Building Free Life: Dialogues with Öcalan, 2019)

The US, Turkey, Russia, Israel, the EU—they all wanted to silence Öcalan. They did not succeed. Human Rights institutions like the Council of Europe and Amnesty International were complicit in this. They were only concerned about the death penalty, and they did not even succeed in getting it properly lifted. The death penalty was simply replaced by an "aggravated life sentence," which is meant to ensure Öcalan is held incommunicado "until death" in an island prison. Still, they did not succeed. The peoples of the Middle East were not pitted against each other, at least not as the consequence of Öcalan's abduction. Öcalan's prison writings are out and, as David Graeber rightly commented, continue to inspire millions. As great a spirit as Öcalan's cannot be confined by prison walls.

The Role of the CPT

The Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) has frequently visited İmralı Island and has made numerous recommendations, which are routinely ignored by the Turkish authorities. Nonetheless, by

continuing its so-called "dialogue" with the Turkish state, the CPT provides a veneer of legitimacy to the ongoing violations of the basic human rights of the prisoners at İmralı Island. Although the CPT has proven unable to improve the situation, which it correctly denounces as unacceptable, the rest of the Council of Europe can constantly refer to how the CPT is dealing with it. This, in turn, provides an excuse for not tackling the situation in any other way.

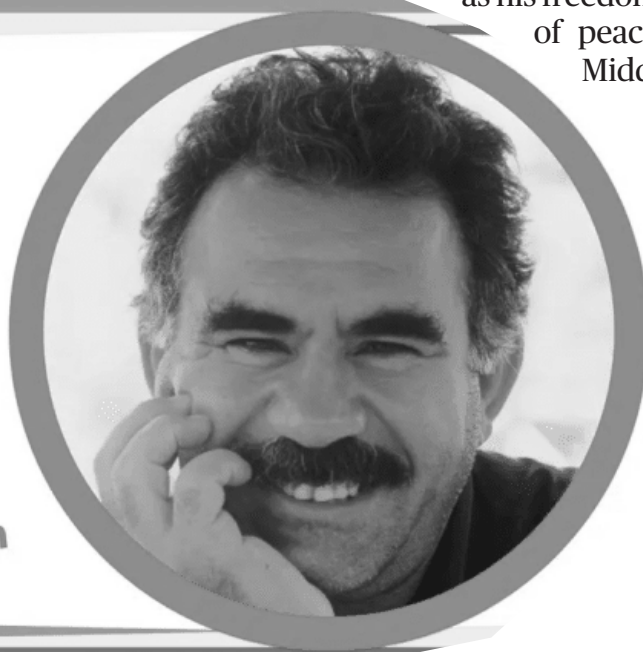
This is why, after only one year, other political prisoners and activists have once again started hunger strikes. For almost three months now, there have been rotating hunger strikes in Turkish prisons and elsewhere to protest Öcalan's isolation and demand his freedom. At the same time, there have been numerous demonstrations around the world as part of the ongoing campaign "The Time Has Come: Freedom for Öcalan!"

Antony Blinken recently said that he has done "a lot of hard thinking" about past decisions on countries like Syria. We have yet to see the result of his thinking. Will the US and NATO stop supporting genocidal attacks by Turkey and respect the choice of the women and peoples of the Middle East—Öcalan's democratic confederalism?

Öcalan and his freedom are indispensable for peace and democracy in the Middle East. Those who openly or covertly support the Turkish war efforts, shut Öcalan out, or deliberately ignore the atrocious conditions he is held in are directly opposing peace. It is as simple as that. We call on everybody to join us in our struggle for freedom for Abdullah Öcalan, as his freedom would be the harbinger of peace in Kurdistan and the Middle East.

**International Initiative
"Freedom for Abdullah
Öcalan—Peace in
Kurdistan"**

Free Öcalan
Ազատութիւնն Էժմալանի Տրեւոյա Օճալան
Öcalan askatu آزادی برای اوچالان Libertà per Öcalan
厄買蘭的自由 Libérez Öcalan ओजलन के लिये आजादी
Frankiz evit Öcalan ئازادی بۆ ئۆچالان
Libertate lui Öcalan オジ Freiheit für Öcalan
לשחרור את אודשלאן Ocalani oxuşk'vit
Vapautta Öcalanille ヤラ
Khululani u Öcalan 蘭
Vrijheid voor Öcalan に Frihet för Öcalan
Libertad para Öcalan 自由 Öcalan'a Özgürlük
Scaoileadh saor Öcalan 自由 الحرة لاولجان
Liberdade para Öcalan を Libertat per a Öcalan
¡Kachariychik Öcalanta!
Ελευθερία στον Οτσαλάν ओजलन ला मुक्त दिवा
Azadî ji bo Öcalan





Solidarity with the Kurdish struggle... without Öcalan?

By Sozdar Koçer

With the recent increased visibility of the Kurdish freedom movement, countless panels, talks and demonstrations about the Kurdish movement have been organized in the past years. Many lectures and demonstrations have presented the concept of Democratic Confederalism with all its experiences and practical examples to different audiences. These include, for instance, the self-governance structures of Bakur (northern Kurdistan/south-east Turkey), which have been implemented by the population since 2005 and which have been systematically and continuously destroyed by the Turkish regime through repression and imprisonment of civil society, activists, mayors, students and elected politicians. The same applies to the achievements of the Mexmûr Camp in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq), a refugee camp that has been running itself autonomously for more than 20 years and which few people are aware of, or the women's revolution in Rojava and the Federation of Northern and Eastern Syria, which is constantly under ideological attacks from all sides, while facing military assaults by the occupier army of the Turkish state. Furthermore, many debates have been held about the attitudes of NATO members and their hypocritical policies towards the communities and towards the implementation of international law in the Middle East region, as if to say: "As long as the Euro-centric rights of our citizens are not harmed, we don't see a reason for upholding human rights on a global scale." Similarly, people became more aware of the criminalization and repression in Europe that affect all those, who stand in solidarity with the Kurdish freedom movement.

In other words, most of us are familiar with the spaces in which such accomplishments and positive examples for alternatives are being discussed. We all know people, who identify with these ideas. And yet, the most important person as the visionary of these implementations, Abdullah Öcalan, is often being bypassed.

An attack on all levels

The Kurdish movement is being attacked on all political, societal, military, and ideological levels. In the circles that we move in, people are conscious of the state repression against the movement in Europe. The radical left, autonomous groups, and all other self-defining groups stand shoulder to shoulder with the Kurdish movement, whenever the images and flags of the YPG/YPJ, the PYD or of revolutionary comrade Sara (Sakine Cansiz) get banned. Confronting the repression in a communal manner constitutes a strong stance.

The Kurdish movement is being attacked on all political, societal, military, and ideological levels

But what about the attitudes that are often expressed as soon as the representative of the Kurdish movement, Abdullah Öcalan, is being referred to during talks and similar events? Or the tendency to chant other slogans, as soon as Kurdish women begin chanting the banned slogan "Biji Serok Apo"?

- Long live leader Apo - [nickname for Abdullah Öcalan] during demonstrations? What about the insecure looks and the silence in one's own ranks? Why are efforts being made to fight against the ban on these flags, but nothing is done for Öcalan? Aren't these related aspects? Where and why do we draw the line?

Culturally conditioned leadership cult?

Activists of the Kurdish women's movement are often confronted with criticism, for instance, when referencing Abdullah Öcalan in their talks, when waving his flags during 8th March International Women's Day demonstrations or when displaying his images in their centers and at events. It is impossible to escape the question "Women's liberation, nice and good, but how critically do you view leadership cult or the fact that you glorify a man from a feminist perspective?!"

These sorts of expressions expose common Euro-centric feminist perspectives and thinking vis-à-vis the Kurdish women's movement. Crucially, such

white, Euro-centric assertions deny the agency of Kurdish women and the Kurdish women's movement that have been struggling against backward, sexist, and patriarchal structures for decades, not least, for instance, by accusing them of ignorance about the "leadership cult" around the dominant man. Apparently, the "other", i.e. non-white women, especially coming from the Middle East, have an inherent tendency to surrender themselves to male domination!

Reference to one's own historical context and perspective is often used by people as a standard for all other struggles. Thus, Nazi history and fascist leadership cult are applied uncritically as a measure to assess Abdullah Öcalan. Nobody says it openly - people carefully express their concerns about "leadership cult", of which they indirectly accuse the Kurds at the end of the day.

The state's targeting of the Kurdish movement, such as exemplified by the banning of Abdullah Öcalan's pictures or certain slogans, is not an attempt to actually protect society from leadership cults. Rather, his personage and ideas are seen as a threat and a potential alternative to the state's own system of domination. We can say that the German state has understood and analyzed Öcalan more comprehensively than some groups and individuals. This is expressed in the weight of the state's policy of repression and criminalization.

While some people are uncertain about whether or not to even mention or openly reference Abdullah Öcalan, they start fragmenting his integrity as the initiator of Democratic Confederalism and as a representative of the Kurdish society and movement in all parts of Kurdistan and the diaspora. In the course of this process, they take advantage of their privileges to lecture me, as an individual, on what or who is worthy of supporting. Thus, one is to mention Rojava without Öcalan or to understand the Kurdish women's movement without the meaning and importance of Öcalan.

No clue about the gender question?

At the same time, the Kurdish women's movement's understanding of the gender question gets denied in this light. Apparently, this is illustrated in the everyday lives of Kurdish women, who see Öcalan, a cis-man, as the pioneering thinker of the women's movement and of jineology, the science of women and life! How paradoxical! How dare they call themselves a gender-egalitarian, ecological, democratic and

liberationist movement!?

The real paradox of the situation lies in the fact that rather than an engagement with the ideas and concepts of the women's liberation ideology, the Kurdish women's liberation movement is reduced to a person's male gender. Abdullah Öcalan's primary treatment as a person of the male sex leads to a limited and short-sighted view of reality - and simultaneously shows the dogmatic attitude of people's attempts to constantly take masculinity as a reference point and to take on rejectionist stances. The mentality of the dominant and toxic-hegemonic masculinity is attributed to a gender rather than being understood as socially-constructed mentalities and attitudes. Instead of fixating on his gender, critical voices ought to actually engage with the defense writings and ideas of Öcalan, which make him what he is to the Kurdish women's movement!

Imrali prison island as a crime scene

As long as patronizing and denialist attitudes towards other women are not overcome and destroyed, no meaningful women's solidarity can develop. In order to understand the Kurdish women's movement, one must engage genuinely with the following questions: Why does Abdullah Öcalan play such an important role for the Kurdish movement? Why does one of the most progressive women's movements in the world reference Abdullah Öcalan in such a strong manner? The answer cannot simply be that all Kurdish women are regressive! But this is exactly the feeling that the many different unfavorable attitudes, which manifest themselves in racist, sexist or Euro-centric behaviors or mindsets, produce.

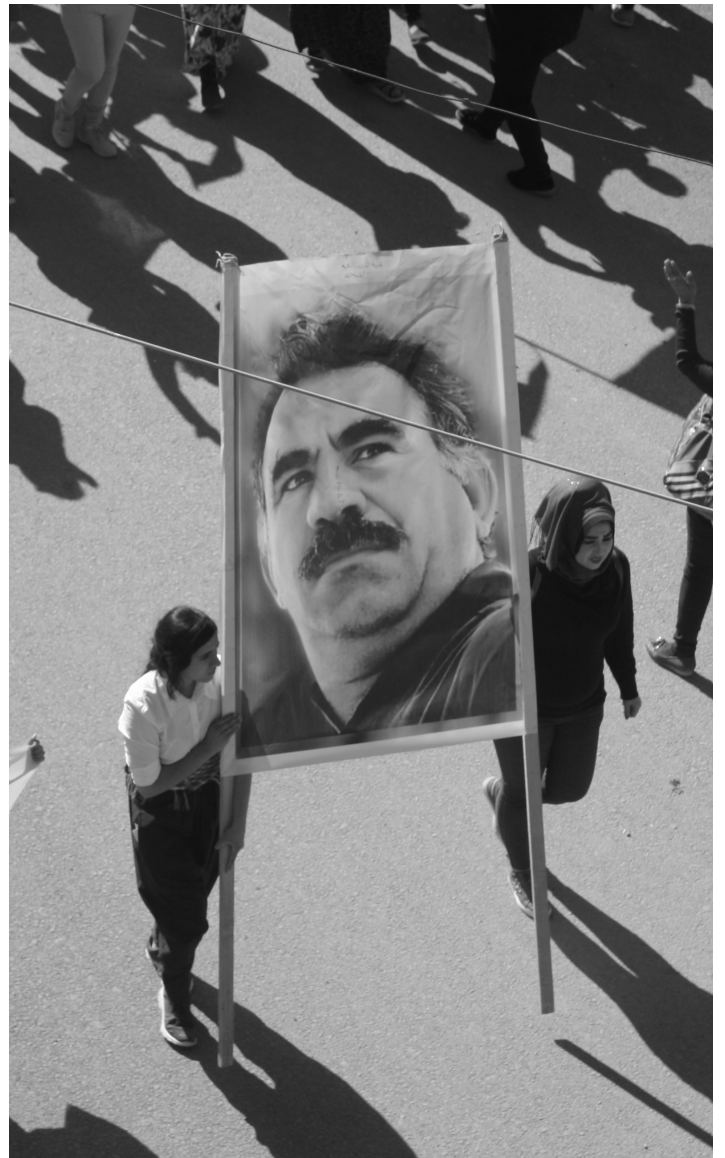
The current threats of the Turkish state to launch a military attack on the self-governance structures of Rojava and the Federation of Northern and Eastern Syria, of Camp Mexmûr and of engal must all be seen as direct attacks on the representative Abdullah Öcalan. That is why our line of sight and our actions should not only be directed at Kurdistan but must also see the prison island of Imrali as a crime scene.

In terms of solidarity, the Kurdish women's movement needs a common praxis, which views Abdullah Öcalan as an indispensable and inseparable thinker of Kurdish society. That is exactly why the HDP representative and member of parliament Leyla Güven and dozens of other women in Turkish prisons have entered a hunger

strike. Their action is a strong stance against the total isolation and prison conditions of Abdullah Öcalan. Likewise, since December 17th 2018, 15 activists in Europe have entered an infinite hunger strike.

In their struggle and in their defense of Abdullah Öcalan, these women are in need of a strong, uncompromising women's solidarity!

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Abdullah Öcalan's Proposals for the Development of the Democratic Society

The redefinition of democratic politics

by Ali Cicek, staff member of Civaka Azad

“The virus is a mirror. It shows what kind of society we live in. We live in a survival society that is ultimately based on the fear of death.

Today, survival is the absolute ultimate, as if we were in a permanent state of war,” comments South Korean-German philosopher Byung-Chul Han on society in the Corona era.

Han goes on to explain that in the face of the pandemic, we are heading toward a biopolitical surveillance regime, and in the face of this pandemic shock, the West will be forced to abandon its liberal principles. The West is thus moving toward a biopolitical quarantine society in which our freedom will be permanently restricted. The winners of these developments seem to be those who plead for more state and power. In Germany, this is evident, among other things, in the rise of the right and the left's (in)capability of criticism.

According to a study on income losses as a result of Corona, the state presents itself as the savior. Der Spiegel magazine, for example, ran the headline “Corona takes it, the state gives it”. Confidence in Germany's political elites has also strengthened. “Corona was a game changer for Merkel,” according to Deutschlandfunk. According to the report, Corona catapulted Chancellor Merkel's popularity to “completely different heights.”

The problem of power and state is also the subject of Abdullah Öcalan's defense writings. He actively led the Kurdish liberation struggle as chairman of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from its founding in 1978 until his abduction on February 15, 1999. He continues to be considered a leading strategist and one of the most important political representatives of Kurdish society. Because of his political philosophy and struggle, he has been imprisoned in almost complete isolation on Imralı prison island for 22 years. The analyses he formulated in the book “Sociology of Freedom” describe a similar picture to Han's theses: “The problem of power and the state is obviously in one of its worst phases. In the age of finance capital, the most thorough monopoly of capital in capitalist modernity, society is undergoing a historically unprecedented disintegration.

The political and moral fabric of society has been shattered. What is happening is a ‘sociocide’ - a more serious social phenomenon than genocide.” Öcalan warns that the nation-state is causing society as a whole to disappear and it is suffering a maximum loss of its political and moral character. The balance of sociocides, he says, is even worse than that of genocides, because it is reflected in the loss of the moral-political quality of society as a whole. Masses of people who do not feel any responsibility even for the most serious social and ecological catastrophes prove this.

Democratic politics as a vaccine in post-Corona times

In the face of this danger, Öcalan proposes democratic politics as a way to win freedom through the defense and organization of society: “The society that defends itself against individualism, the nation-state, and monopolies through democratic politics transforms itself into a modern democratic society by making its political fabric functional.” In the post-Corona era, where the state and power are expanding for all to see, this question of defending society is more urgent than ever. What political formations will emerge from the structural crisis of the world system in general, and the current crisis-ridden period of the post-Corona era in particular, will be determined by intellectual, political, and moral efforts. With this in mind, I would like to elaborate on the concept of democratic politics proposed by Öcalan below.

Politics as the art of freedom

Öcalan asks, what is politics, exploring concepts such as freedom, state, power, morality, society, democracy and peace in his defense writings. In his books “Beyond State, Power and Violence” and “Sociology of Freedom” in particular, he explores the question of what politics actually is and how it has developed historically. As a provider of ideas for a social movement, he also formulates political tasks for the forces of democratic modernity that oppose violence and capitalist exploitation.

Central to Öcalan's concept of politics is his demarcation between it and the state, which he formulates as follows:

"State means rules, politics, on the other hand, is creativity. The state governs the existing, politics, on the other hand, governs by creating. State is craft, politics is art."

To make his view clearer, Öcalan lists a number of activities that he does not count as politics: State activities are not political, he says, but administrative activities. Based on the state, he says, politics is not made, but administered. Matters that do not affect vital social interests do not constitute politics in the true sense of the word. They take place on the level of routine matters that are handled by other social institutions. Matters that have no connection with freedom, equality and democracy are basically none of politics' business. The opposite, however, fundamentally concerned politics: the vital interest of society included survival, security, food, and the freedom, equality, and democracy that were prevented by power and the state.

Political and state affairs are therefore not the same thing, but are in conflict with each other. Politics is narrowed and weakened the more the state expands and intensifies. Öcalan's definition of politics approximates that of Hannah Arendt, who wrote in her essay "Freedom and Politics": "The meaning of politics is freedom." For Öcalan, politics is the art of freedom, and democratic politics is the true school in which freedom is learned and lived. As much as social politics produces freedom, power and the state are areas where freedom disappears.

Power and politics

In Öcalan's works, the definition of terms takes on a central significance. Without the definition of fundamental terms, there is a danger of drowning in a sea of countless individual phenomena. A great confusion of terms in the social sciences reigns here, especially in the network of relationships between power, leadership and politics. These terms are used as if they were identical and can be cited as one of the reasons for the disorientation in the social sciences of the present. For example, any (militaristic) activity of a ruling system would

be called politics and the political participation of citizens would be reduced to elections held every four years. "When I think of the terms war, conflict and exploitation, which are almost identified with politics, I feel quite different," Öcalan writes in this context.

Öcalan's reinterpretation of the concept of politics in the context of freedom and equality juxtaposes politics and power as two diametrical poles. According to him, politics must first begin as resistance to power, which is based on the exploitation and oppression of others. Since power seeks to conquer and colonize every social unit and individual, politics must seek to win and liberate every unit and individual. Since every relationship, unitary or individual, is power-related, it is also political in the opposite sense. Since the networks of power are everywhere, politics must also be resistant everywhere. Since power is based on every social unit and every individual, politics must also be based on every unit and every individual. Öcalan defines any "anti-monopolistic community" as a unit: "Every community - from the democratic nation to the village association, from an international confederation to the city district - is a unit. Every governing body, tribal or urban, local

to national, is a unit. There can be units of two people, even of just one person, to units representing billions of people."

Politics from a historical perspective

Öcalan derives his concept of politics from history.

Throughout the history

of civilization, he says, the dominant tendency has not been subjugation but resistance. Among other things, in his historical perspective, he cites numerous examples of politicized cities resisting the forces of capitalist civilization, pushing back the role of politics. For example, he sees the reason for the glory of Athens and Rome in antiquity as their respective political strength. He presents Babylon, Carthage, and Palmyra as examples of a city's independence and autonomy. In order not to come under the yoke of larger powers and states in the surrounding area, these would have skillfully and masterfully pursued a policy of independence and autonomy. Öcalan also sees the resistance of urban autonomies in the Middle Ages, writing, "We are virtually facing a starry sky full of cities that resisted great empires." This common thread of resistant

"State means rules, politics, on the other hand, is creativity. The state governs the existing, politics, on the other hand, governs by creating. State is craft, politics is art."

urban autonomy is drawn up to the triumph of the centralist nation-state in the nineteenth century.

Central to the interpretation of politics is the recognition that history continues in the present. Thus, the central conclusion from historical retrospection is that there has been a continuity of local and regional autonomy politics in history and that the history of this democratic-confederal tradition prevails even today. For Öcalan, there is no place where resistance, i.e., politics, has not taken place.

Politics as daily moral behavior

Politics also has a moral dimension in Öcalan's thinking. The fundamental role of morality is to provide society with the rules it needs to continue to exist and survive, and to give it the ability to implement them. The role of politics, on the other hand, is to provide the moral rules necessary for society and also to constantly discuss and select the means and methods for satisfying society's basic material as well as spiritual needs.

Just as in the historical perspective civilization has pushed back the role of politics, so in all civilized societies the sphere of social morality has been limited and the sphere of law has always been increased. Just as the political capacity of society has been curtailed and replaced by administration and bureaucratization, the state and power have curtailed and replaced society's moral capacity with the law. But nevertheless, for Öcalan, it is not the state's legal system that sustains society, but the moral element. Thus, he argues, morality is crucial to the defense and organization of society, in addition to democratic politics. Politics, in this sense, is for Öcalan "the daily enlightenment and the daily moral behavior."

Self-defense

Thus, democratic politics means the existence of a democratic atmosphere and a responsibility to continuously develop the moral and political society. Together with democratic politics, Öcalan considers self-defense to be the core of contemporary politics. He said that self-defense protects society against attacks of power on its existence, its freedom, and its egalitarian and democratic structure. In a certain sense, it could be called the security policy of the moral and political society. In this context, however, self-defense is not

limited to external attacks, such as the militarization of the nation-state or exploitation by various monopolies of power.

Öcalan points out that contradictions and tensions can also arise at any time in the internal structures of society: "Today we are confronted with a reality that permeates all pores of society not only from the outside, but also from the inside." In this regard, social sexism is one of the most common weapons against moral and political society, one of the ideological instruments that spread power and exploitation to every pore of society, he said. Therefore, Öcalan sees the democratic freedom and equality movement of women as having a main role in solving the problems of society. Thus, democratic politics is only possible with the complete freedom and equality of women, the right to complete self-determination and free expression of will in all matters concerning gender.

Feminization of politics

Against ideological instruments, such as the ideology of societal sexism or patriarchy, women could thus achieve a victory in the ideological field through self-defense or a women's liberation ideology. This is because societal sexism literally besieges societies and interpersonal relationships, so that daily patriarchal violence in its various forms is considered and accepted as normal. Öcalan points out that general social freedom and equality does not always extend to freedom and equality for women. Therefore, the formula that applies to him is that the degree of freedom for women also defines the degree of freedom in society. Specific organizing, i.e., the creation of specific democratic goals and organizations for women, is considered a prerequisite for this. In the context of politics, Öcalan writes here, "When women's liberation tackles the political sphere, it must know that it faces the hardest struggle there. Without the knowledge of how victory in the political sphere is possible, no achievement can last."

Winning in the political sphere does not mean that the women's movement is striving for a state. On the contrary, in the struggle against hierarchical and etatist structures, it means creating political structures that are not state-fixated. It means striving for a democratic-ecological society as well as gender liberation."

Thus, in democratic politics, the movement for women's freedom has a leadership role to play in building extra-state political structures. A democratic women's organization hereby includes all structures of civil society, the field of human rights as well as local governments. One mechanism proposed by Öcalan in this context is the system of co-chairmanship, which should be implemented within local governments and political parties. In this "feminization of politics," beyond the increasing presence of women in decision-making processes, the way politics is practiced is changed. The goal is to shatter masculine patterns that reward behaviors such as competitiveness, urgency, hierarchy, or homogeneity. Instead, feminized politics seeks to emphasize the importance of the small, the interconnected, the everyday, questioning the artificial separation between the private and the political.

Alternative system building as the task of democratic politics

So if we ask with Öcalan what democratic politics is, it is also about the question of what structures and institutions of participation and co-creation are needed in order to become actors again. Öcalan also defines democratic politics as an institutional totality. The practice of democratic politics could not unfold if there were not numerous institutionalizations and activities such as parties, groups, councils, non-governmental organizations, media, rallies, and so on. For a respectful handling of all differences in society and the focus on equality and consensus-building, continuous social education work would also be needed.

In the new interpretation of the concept of politics, the central task of democratic politics is an alternative system building. In the words of Öcalan, "democratic politics is the way of building democratic confederalism." While capitalism is trying to preserve its power within the global crisis by rebuilding the nation-state, the task of the forces of democratic modernity is to build a democratic confederal system that aims to defend and develop moral and political society. In this regard, democratic politics offers every part and identity of society the opportunity to express itself and become a political force. Each community, ethnicity, culture, religious community, intellectual movement, economic unit, etc., could each structure and express itself autonomously as a political unit.

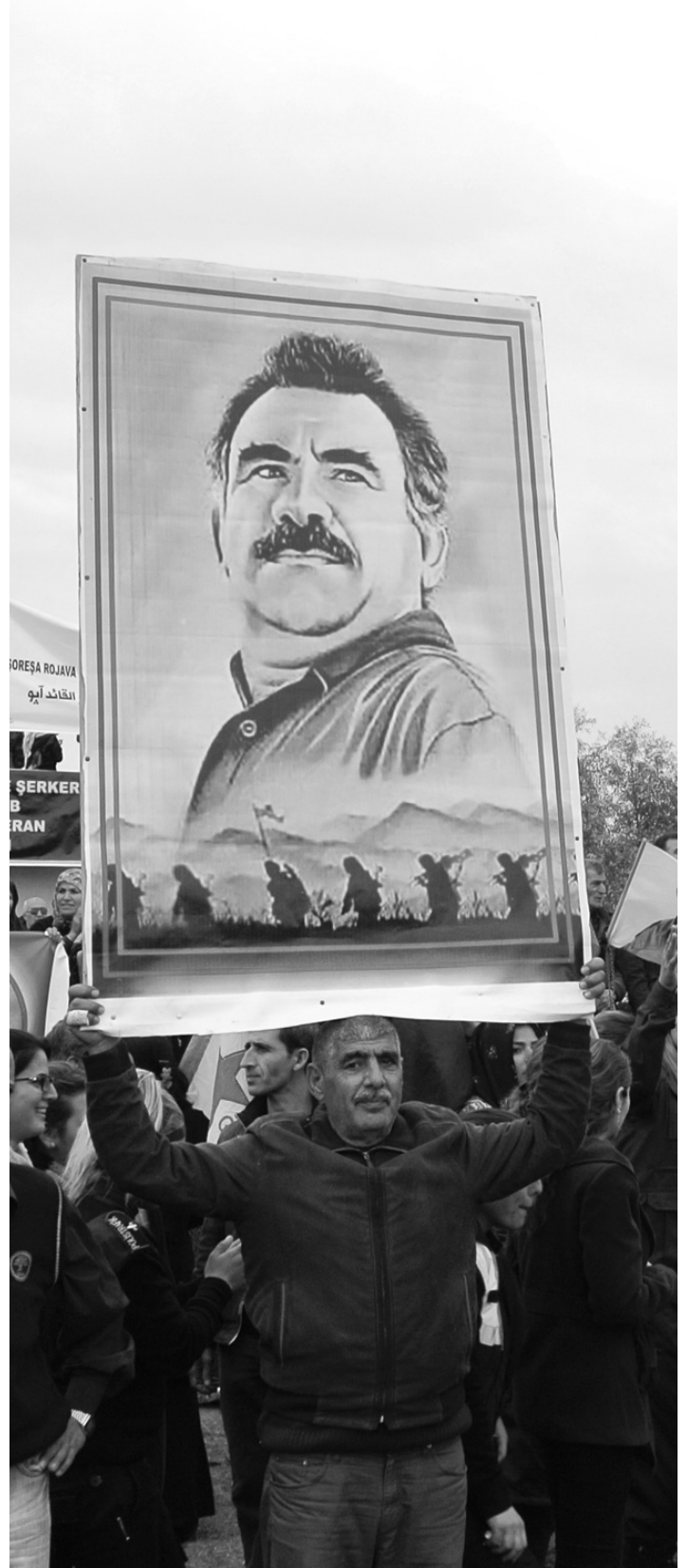
If we consider that for Öcalan politics has suffered the greatest loss in the capitalist world system and that today we are witnessing a political decay of unparalleled proportions, then democratic confederalism is the central means of repoliticizing society. Whereas capitalist modernity is always administered through instructions, democratic modernity governs by actually making policy through discussion and consensus.

Redefining Democratic Politics in the Post-Corona Era

Similar to the philosopher Han's view of contemporary society under the conditions of a permanent state of war, Öcalan views the character of the state and power as an "iron cage" in which



society is locked. Accordingly, how things continue “after Corona” also depends on the extent to which democratic politics can assert itself in the face of power and the state. It is precisely in this “annus horribilis,” the Corona period marked by danger and insecurity, that the state presents itself as the only helper, which in turn, as we have explained above, can have fatal consequences. For it harbors the danger that the state of emergency can be declared the normal state. The only prevention against this is the constant development of democratic politics. In this context, Öcalan is not content with merely taking stock of the situation; with his reinterpretation of democratic politics, he argues for a paradigmatic shift in politics itself. We must not leave our political tasks to those who destroy the plurality of politics, abuse politics for their power and have developed this into a profession in order to be able to live from it. And as Hannah Arendt writes, one cannot talk about freedom without always already talking about politics. For freedom is synonymous with democratic politics, with political action in public.





Cooperative Economy:

On the Path Towards Democratic Modernity

Introduction

“Seize the means of production!” - this may be the short definition of revolution according to classical, materialist Marxism. The Kurdish Freedom Movement is known to expand the understanding of revolution, focusing especially on women's liberation, ecology and grassroots democracy, going beyond pure economism. Nevertheless, any revolution necessarily has to provide answers for the economic sphere, as well. The essence of the Kurdish Freedom Movement, not only in Rojava, is to struggle for democratic modernity. According to Abdullah Öcalan, democratic modernity, as opposed to capitalist modernity, is not only based on a moral-political society and democratic confederalism as its political and social organization but also on an alternative economy (eco-industry) as its foundation.

The Rojava revolution is focusing on redirecting the means of production directly into the hands of the people through the establishment of cooperatives rather than realizing a full centralization of the economy, which would not be in line with democratic modernity. Sometimes we even refer to the economy of Rojava as a cooperative economy.

But what is a cooperative? The two most fundamental requirements of a cooperative are that the means of production are owned by the members of the cooperative, and that the decisions are discussed and decided upon collectively and democratically. On top of this, new forms of (re-) production, relationships, and community need to be developed at the same time since cooperatives should never be limited only to the economic form of oppression. The economic committee of North and East Syria releases regulations concerning the role and practice of cooperatives. According to one of the regulations: *“The fulfillment of the basic needs of the society and the harmony with the environment are taken as a basis in all the activities of the cooperatives.”*

Cooperatives in Rojava Today

The social economy rooted in cooperatives is aimed to become the foundation of the economy in Rojava. Even though the existing cooperatives are definitely more than just a nice showpiece to the outside

world and the number of cooperatives is increasing every day, the economy is still of a very mixed nature. Obviously, one should not underestimate the necessity of a war economy in which a large part of the resources are spent on self-defense and the consequences this implies. As a result, some centralization has been implemented to guarantee the provision of basic necessities; however, private businesses still predominately exist for the time being.

In order to fully understand the economic situation of Rojava today, we have to take into account the internal colonial oppression of the region by the Baath regime throughout the last decades.

Prior to the revolution, the vast majority of the agricultural land had been under control of the regime and a strict mono-culture of weed was forced upon the farmers. After the People's Defense Units (YPG) gained control over the first regions in North and East Syria in 2012, many of the feudal landowners left along with the regime. A great portion of this land thus was able to be redistributed to local farmers and landless people as well as cooperatives. However, according to the social contract of the self-administration, land, water, and energy are ultimately the property of all people and can, therefore, never truly belong to any private owner.

Today, there are cooperatives in a great variety of different branches and sectors from small scale production like bakeries, textiles, canned food to services like tailors or hairdressers. The majority of cooperatives, however, are agricultural cooperatives that focus on growing fruit, vegetables, or crops. One of the most advanced cooperative infrastructures existed in the canton of Afrin before it was occupied by Islamist gangs on behalf of the Turkish state in 2018. Compared to other regions of Rojava, the superior economic preconditions in Afrin before the start of the revolution, and the geographical advantages allowed for a more diversified production as well as for the integration of more technical and sophisticated products in the cooperative economy.

On the one hand, the role of the economic committee of the self-administration in the cooperative economy is to support existing cooperatives wherever they can. One of the common forms of support of the self-administration, for instance, is the regular provision of seeds and fertilizer for agricultural production or the improvement of basic infrastructure (especially water and electricity are a problem in many regions further south). In addition, they facilitate education for all cooperative members (sometimes of technical nature but often also regarding the ideological foundations of the revolution). On the other hand, the economic committee visits villages and neighborhoods around Rojava in order to convince the people of the benefits of building up their own cooperative.

The chosen method, however, is self-empowerment - nobody is forced to participate in the cooperative economy.

At this stage, the cooperatives in North and East Syria take the two-fold role of meeting people's immediate needs on the one hand, and a more long term perspective on the other. The aim is to combine the immediate improvement of material living conditions while providing a long-term solution that can function as the cornerstone for a post-capitalist society at the same time. An example of this approach is the bread crisis that we are currently experiencing. As a solution the self-administration does not simply hand out bread as a short-term cure for the shortage but instead initiated the construction of new facilities for cooperatives that will produce bread in regions especially affected like Shadadê or Deir Ez-Zoir. Especially in rural

areas this strategy literally implies people growing their own basic nutrition to reach autonomy.

Important to mention is also that each cooperative does not only provide secure and liberating work for its members, it is beneficial for the entire community. The experience of the the past years has shown, for example, that the cooperatives are able to provide fruit and vegetables, for a lower price than the same products from private market based production. In this way, cooperatives play an active role in providing affordable nutrition within a constant state of economic crisis that we are experiencing. This is especially interesting considering that many cooperative production attempts in the western world often have a very exclusive character and are only affordable for the middle and upper class.

The cooperatives of Rojava are closely linked to the commune structures. One can say that the commune and the cooperative constitute the communal economy together hand in hand. The local culture is heavily based on communal life, the family and the neighborhood. Even though the region has not been free from the influence of capitalist modernity, the society of North and East Syria is by far not as individualized as many regions today, even far beyond the Western world. Capitalist mentality has not managed to fully conquer the moral of the people. Leftists from the center of capitalist modernity tend to underestimate the influence of the reality of local culture regarding the economy. One can say that the communal economy is still deeply rooted in the people of Rojava.



Just as all other aspects of life within the revolution of North and East Syria, the economic sphere also has an autonomous women organization: Aboriya jin (women's economy). The core of the work of aboriya jin is the build-up of women's cooperatives. These have given many women - who had been locked inside their own four walls for years - the opportunity to get more involved in society.

However, instead of only including women in the workforce (the liberal understanding of feminism), within cooperatives women have the opportunity to manage their own work, educate themselves, and organize together with other women far beyond their economic needs.

Last but not least, cooperatives are also seen as a major pillar to building up an ecological alternative to capitalist modernity, inspired by the social ecology of Murray Bookchin. Obviously, a cooperative does not by definition produce in harmony with nature. Instead, the understanding is that real ecological change can only be realized through the establishment of a radical new economic system that overcomes the unlimited hunger for growth through profit within the logic of capitalism. In this way, the cooperatives are the core to establish a network of self-sufficiency that takes the needs of society as its sole basis. There is no incentive for (indefinite) growth that threatens any future life on this planet. Nevertheless, there are also concrete projects that are aimed at realizing ecological improvements to decelerate the worldwide ecological catastrophe. One major issue that is being tackled for instance, is to diversify the monocultural agricultural production of crops. Other projects include the provision of public transportation and reforestation.

Outlook and Challenges

The cooperative is a necessary but not sufficient condition for change. In the end, the institutional framework of a cooperative in and of itself does not guarantee a revolutionary economy. To begin with, the people have to be willing to put it into practice. This includes being flexible to learning new ways of (re-)production as well as rejecting feudal and capitalist influences within society while restoring the moral intuition of natural society. If members of a cooperative are not using the meetings on a regular basis to raise their concerns and proposals but instead passively let a single person or family take all decisions, for example, this may only reproduce feudal and patriarchal power structures. Therefore, education, self-education as well as the openness and institutionalization of criticism and self-criticism are vital parts of cooperatives in Rojava.

What hinders the cooperative economy from expanding into more spheres qualitatively as well as quantitatively are first and foremost the constant attacks from global imperialist forces as well as regional nation states. The embargo that is imposed from all sides as well as the constant condition of war require a high level of creativity and endurance. It is important to understand, however, that not only the physical warfare on the frontline, nor the economic war by capitalist hegemony, but also the special warfare through media, agents etc. is trying everything in their power to prevent the implementation of an alternative and autonomous economy. This includes not only the constant underlying "automatized" special warfare of capitalist modernity, but also very explicitly targeted attempts to weaken the revolution. A concrete example is a recent trend of sharply increased efforts by the US and institutions of the system to hire youth involved in revolutionary structures - attracting them by high salaries. This poses the great danger of incorporating the youth into the psychological mindset and material dependencies of individual capitalism instead of getting together to build up a cooperative in their neighborhood.

Considering the harsh conditions which the revolution sees itself confronted with after nearly a decade, the development of cooperatives as a promise for a new level of communal society gives hope to people far beyond the borders of North and East Syria. In the end, the cooperatives of Rojava today are probably the most straightforward realization of one of the underlying foundations of the revolution: People reclaiming their land that had been taken from them by nation states.



The Way to Rojava

A Way Back to Your Own History

German comrades writing about the history of resistance in central Europe and today's Germany. Their search for this nearly lost quest is inspired by the Kurdish freedom movement.

The text was first published in the Kurdistan report.

Many internationalists I met in Rojava are fed up with the struggles in their home countries. Their faith in a revolutionary transformation of society, whether in France, Spain, Germany or England, is weak. And nobody really wants to identify with these societies. But it is not that simple; to stop being part of a society and history is not possible. The revolution makes sure of that - and especially for Kurdish comrades.

We are sitting in the shade with tea, bread, olives and tomatoes. It is a short break from working. The conversations revolve around the history of the region as well as the society. They speak of the history of the Kurds in Rojava, about the last years of the revolution, about the time of the Syrian regime under Bashar al-Assad, about the effects of the worldwide youth revolt of the 68's in Syria. It goes even further back in the history of the Middle East. The comrades speak of Zarathustra and Mani as if they still lived among us, filling their thoughts with new spirit. They are examples of social resistance to dogmatism in faith and the glorification of the state.

And then the question comes to us Germans: "What is the history of your society"? At first, there is silence in our group. We German internationalists find it difficult to talk about our history. We know not enough about it. We are getting asked about the *Sehids* (the fallen, martyrs), the resistance against fascism. About the revolution of 1848, the Peasants' Revolts and the heretics, about the Germanic tribes and their resistance against the imperialism of the Roman Empire... No, we don't want to be asked about the Teutons. I can read it in the faces of the other Germans: we don't want to be Germans. We don't want to be associated with German arms exports to Turkey, with German fascism, with the genocide of the Herero and Nama and the Holocaust.

But how much do we know about the correlations in our history? About the unwritten history of the

defeated? Their struggles and resistance against oppression, patriarchy, displacement, the state and capitalism? How could a fascist mentality prevail in society and the state?

A few days later we sit together again. Without an internet connection and only with the books on our E-book reader we have dedicated ourselves to the big question: "Who are we and from which history has our today's society arisen"? Silvia Federici and Friedrich Engels - these are our first clues. We learn about societies which lived and operated according to communal and cooperative values, in which women had a central role, in which all persons were involved in important decisions, e.g. about war and peace. The places where the meetings of Germanic tribes were held were called *Thingstätte* (thing = people's gathering, court gathering). Yes, today only the NPD (far right party) in Grevesmühlen and its "Thinghaus" as a Nazi meeting place remind us of these places.

We argue... does this old history even matter to us today? Does it make sense to address it and use it as a reference point in the analysis of social changes? Everything seems so appropriated by nationalist thought and fascist symbolism. But everything we read in Engels' books about the Germanic tribes at the time of the Roman Empire contradicts the ideology of German fascism. So why should we leave this history to the Nazis?

But how did hierarchical structures develop in these very liberal societies, all the way to kingdoms, e.g. the Franconian Empire, and then to modern nation states? Again and again we share what we have read with other internationalist comrades. Again and again we come across many similarities in the historical developments of past societies in Europe and can draw parallels to the developments in the Middle East. We discussed the development of the Franconian Empire with French comrades. It was the result of the ever-expanding and deepening

structures of rule of Germanic tribes - the Franks - until the new Holy Roman Empire replaced the Imperium Romanum. It was Charlemagne who forced the new order of Christianity and feudalism upon the societies of Central Europe by violence. But even against this violence there was great resistance. It was precisely the Frisians and Saxons who did not accept the new hierarchical order and held on to the idea of the Allmende (common land). An idea according to which the goods that people need to live are not owned by individuals but by the community. Funnily enough these are the Saxons and Frisians, about whom we in Germany occasionally make fun of, which seems contradictory since we are taking up their struggles and are calling for the communalization of convenience goods and the revival of the Allmende.

With Italian comrades we discuss Federici's book "Caliban and the Witch" and how in the Renaissance period society resisted dogmatic Catholicism and hundreds, if not thousands, of resistant groups of heretics were formed. They interpreted Christianity in a free and democratic way and criticized the double standards of Catholic priests. And at the same time they opposed social inequality, hierarchies and the economic exploitation of peasants by the nobility. Many of those insurgents were burned as witches, incapacitated, disenfranchised. These were the first signs of peasants' revolts, which challenged the existing order together with the heretics. Federici calls this the "first proletarian international", since this movement did not stop at the borders of principalities and empires but extended across the whole of Europe.

„Wir sind des Geyers schwarzer Haufen - Heyah, Heyoh - Wir wolln mit Pfaff und Adel raufen - Heyah Heyoh“ (We are Geyer's black crowd - Heyah, Heyoh - We want to fight the priests and the nobility - Heyah Heyoh). Memories from my school days occur. The melody of the song about Florian Geyer is still in my head. It is a song about the uprisings of the Bundschuh movement at the beginning of the 16th century. In Southwest Germany farmers organized themselves as "Haufen" [old fashioned word for crowd], small armed groups which burned down churches and castles and built up democratic structures of rural self-government.

In this period the movement of the Beguines started as well. Women, like Mechthild of Magdeburg, joined together in communities and searched for a life beyond marriage or monastery walls. They lived a freer life in convents that were open to all women, where they could be independent from their husbands or fathers. These convents were

not subject to any religious order or ecclesiastical hierarchy. The women elected their representatives themselves, often worked in collectives and shared their money equally. The Beguines, living communities of solidarity, quickly spread throughout Central Europe, especially in what is now the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

But the Beguines are not only interesting for our search for the resistant forms of life in Europe. In the branch of Jinoloji [women's science] women are also researching this history. And just like in those times villages are being built for women again. In the village of Jinwar women live autonomously from men, create their own economic foundations and relearn social knowledge, e.g. natural medicine that was nearly forgotten.

But what happened to the Beguinages in Europe? During the Reformation, backed up by Luther's view that women were created exclusively as housewives and mothers and that individual economic success was a sign that one was chosen by god, the last Beguine Conventions were forced to dissolve.

We come across Max Weber's book "The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of Capitalism", we read Öcalan's thoughts on the Emergence of Capitalism... Protestant morality no longer had anything to oppose the exploitation of capitalism in Central Europe - no values, no limits. Everything became possible, the only justification from now on was profit.

On the playlist of comrades from England we find the song "Hey ho nobody home meat nor drink nor money have I none". It is the melody of the song "Heho spann den Wagen an" [Heho harness the carriage] - we also know it from our school days. It's an old song from the early years of the growing movement of landless people in England. Driven from their fields and not willing to live in the city and factory, more and more people roam through the country - not infrequently begging and stealing. What other option was left for them, since they didn't accept a life of exploitation and servitude? In Germany it is especially the weavers who become famous for resisting capitalism and industrialization in the middle of the 19th century. They destroyed their looms and started riots. We will be humming "Deutschland, wir weben dein Leichentuch" [Germany, we weave your shroud] for the next days while working. It is the scoring of Heinrich Heine's poem with same name, a reckoning of the beginning industrialization and the monarchy.

What could have become out of this old empire? After Napoleon was defeated and the old borders

were established again, many people pinned their hopes on a united Germany. They hoped for the unification and identity of the people on the basis of rights and freedoms and not serfdom and servitude. But did it have to become the German nation state? Unifying everything, creating nationalism, establishing colonialism as the key foreign policy and oppression as the domestic one. Yes, there were alternatives, there is never anything without an alternative. The Baden Revolution arose from one of these alternative ideas. Revolutionaries like Gustav Struve, Amalie Struve and Friedrich Hecker stood for a different idea of Germany, they stood for a socialist republic. They were influenced by ideas of the Enlightenment, the beginning socialist movement and traditional forms of social life. They were concerned with the liberation of the individual, economic equality, and self-government of society according to traditional forms - not according to the values of bourgeois democracy. But even this short revolution would have completely disappeared from our consciousness, if we had not sung the Heckerlied to lift our spirits in the evenings we spent together.

But for the young socialists of these days the Baden Revolution was certainly a moment of learning and recognition. These experiences contributed in part to the fact that only a few decades later (immediately after World War I), Council Republics were founded throughout Germany, in which society took its future into its own hands. Once again a time had come when the path of social development was not predetermined, but the outcome of the struggle between radical democracy and state centralism was still open. A struggle in which so many revolutionaries gave their life while defending their idea of freedom. The determination and commitment in the resistance of revolutionaries like Erich Mühsam, Anita Augspurg and Kurt Eisner has become more imaginable through the experiences of the revolution in Rojava - our clarity of what is to be defended has grown.

Well then? Shall we continue? There comes the smashing of the Council Republics with the force of rising fascism. This force which destroyed so much, if not everything: parties, unions, trust, hopes. And in its worst form, the Holocaust, this force even shattered the belief in the human ability to live together in peace.

This history, too, pulls its strings in a region that is only a few kilometres away from us. "The role model of German fascism, the personal role model of Hitler was Atatürk and the genocide of the Armenians",

Kurdish comrades who grew up in Bakur [Northern Kurdistan] and joined the defence units (YPG/YPJ) to defend the city of Kobane against the Islamic State, tells.

"Hitler saw Atatürk as a shining star of a nationalist struggle for the creation of a nation that should be based on one language, one flag and one people. And the Kurdish liberation movement is still resisting against this state today".

And where was the resistance against German fascism? Did they not exist, or did they disappear in history - written by the ruling class? The second thing is rather true than the first. The Edelweiss Pirates, Alliance of Red Front-Fighters, Red Women and Girls' Federation, Revolutionary Union Opposition and individual Partisans, are only some of the many names and organizations which organized against German fascism. And behind the organizations there were people with biographies which we can read and understand, like Maria Wachter, Georg Elser, Erna Eifler, Wolfgang Abendroth and Gertrud Koch - we could present a list over many thousands of names.

We tell the Kurdish comrades about the Republic of Schwarzenberg, a small region in the Erzgebirge. At the end of World War II, it lay for six weeks between the advancing armies of the Allies. Antifascists in Schwarzenberg did not wait until the Allies came, instead they formed their own antifascist action committees in more than 20 towns and villages of the region. Such anti-fascist action committees were formed in many cities of the former German Reich. Often these structures of antifascist resistance made the first arrests of Nazis among the old administrations and in factories. They organized the tasks that were necessary for the survival of the people and put the infrastructure back into operation. They were also the driving force in the organization of workers in new trade unions, which held on to socialist ideas. But in the East as well as in the West there was no interest in giving space to the anti-fascist committees to build new social structures.

Soon the SPD (Democratic Socialists party) forbade its members to join the committees and the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) tried to integrate the committees into its construction of a Socialist Unity Party. As different as the motives for this were, one motive was the same: the enforcement of a functioning, centralized state and the disempowerment of political self-organization of the people. Would it have been possible to rebuild socialist council structures in a New Germany? Yes, it would have been possible.



It would have become more than just a possibility if only the democratic, revolutionary forces had been able to assert themselves against the forces and ideology of the state.

But from where did all these people get the strength and will for their struggles? After hearing this question one of our comrades laughs. Her name is “Amargi”, which means “freedom”. She says that with the emergence of the first hierarchies in the societies of Mesopotamia, the word “freedom” also appeared. This word originated from the knowledge of a social life in freedom, mutual help and the connection with nature.

“From this knowledge of a free life, people drew their will and strength to resist and to fight for a renewed freedom”.

The basis for this, our Kurdish comrades say, is that the people feel connected with their country and their society, the country and society they come from and where they live. They call this “Welatparezi”, “defense of the homeland”. And also for us internationalists, this term has become commonplace when we walk through the districts to visit those families. But in German? What would it mean, “Love for and defending of the homeland”? We are interested in hearing news of the “Ende Gelände” protests against coal mining in Germany. People whose villages are destroyed and thus their homes and their social draught are destroyed, are standing at the edge of the mining area. Activists climb into the trees of the Hambach Forest to defend a piece of nature. Resolutely anti-fascists face the

new right movement in their neighborhoods.... These images and voices give us an idea what “Welatparezi” can mean.

We are the ones at the end of a chain of interwoven socialist, feminist, ecological, democratic and anarchist struggles. We are the ones who are the latest link in the struggle for land, equality, solidarity and freedom that has run through the whole of history, including Europe.

Amargi says about our handling of this history and our societies:

“The Kurdish movement started to organize against colonialism in Kurdistan. Your revenge for the long history of wars and annihilation the Germans caused, must be to organize and defend the society against capitalism and nationalism”.





Europeans in Rojava

Why do we go there?

In the summer of 2018, a group of Basque comrades had the chance of visiting and learning about the Rojava revolution first-hand. Before going, we really wanted to discover what we read in books and that never stopped creating questions for us. As other places could be at another time, Rojava is one of the most important revolutionary experience in the world today, and it is mandatory to visit and exchange experiences with this territory in resistance and construction. From an internationalist point of view, the goal is not only to go and support the revolution that is taking place there, it is also to draw some lessons and conclusions that in some way can help us imagine a future of struggle outside of Kurdistan. Besides, of course, socializing with the comrades there the struggle of the Basque Country.

The official History has been written from Europe, in the center of the Capitalist Modernity, and this has educated all of us with a colonial mentality in the deepest place of our thoughts. We need to be humble to value Middle Eastern projects, and visiting them, it helps eliminate our colonial mentality. The colonial mentality is totally linked to a western perspective of thought and action. Because of this, it is very interesting to imagine revolutions from outside Europe. A very important task that you receive when visiting Rojava, is to begin a work of deconstruction of the positivist mentality, closely linked to the development of cultural capitalism, and to imagine new forms of human organization. In addition, many of them have to imagine this revolutions rescuing experiences from ancient civilizations, from the natural society, also known as communal life, one in which people interact in community and without any symptoms of domination, with strong leadership from women in balance with nature. Since much of the social heritage of our history in Europe has been destroyed and blurred, it is time to extract from our own history the emancipatory experiences that have existed. The experience of Rojava is very useful to launch questions to western revolutionaries, and to make us hesitate about many statements and principles that we believe to be universal and unchangeable.

Many times, revolutionary experiences are visited looking for concrete, scientific and tangible answers. It is common for militants who seek to relaunch and / or activate the struggles in their countries, aspiring to find magical theoretical formulas that answer the “how”, and Rojava, rather than answering this question, is capable raising doubts about the question itself. In our opinion, the commitment to the construction of a Democratic Nation based on Democratic Confederalism, is being able to overcome theoretical and intellectual barriers and to collect from historical experiences their best successes, radically leaving aside the tight dichotomies between, for example, Anarchism VS Communism. In a time when the revolutionary spirit that plagued the world at the end of the 20th century was falling, the Kurdish liberation movement was able to identify the exhaustion of political trends that had drawn the different struggles in the last century. And so, after years of deliberation and slow debates, they managed to draw lessons from the history of the struggle for human liberation, and made a synthesis between the successes of the communist and anarchist trends, giving a central role to women and their liberation in every inch of the struggle.

With a decidedly heterodox attitude, the Kurdish movement radically criticizes the authoritarian drift of real socialism, with its highest expression in the Soviet Union. Their view of the role that the State had to play in social transformation ended up leading to a bureaucratic-military apparatus that did not know how to maximize the leadership of the masses in the revolution and their necessary transition towards the communist mentality, but instead created new relations of power and domination within a Socialist State. Similarly, criticism of anarchism focuses on its individualistic, nihilistic tendency, which even neoliberalism has promoted. A vision in which the individual is above all, and the social and collective dimension, necessary for the life of any free person, is lost. Therefore, as we said before, the lessons that the Kurdish movement draws from the different ideological trends of a revolutionary nature help us to imagine what the way forward

could be, learning from the mistakes of the past. Whoever seeks revolutions free of contradictions should not go to Rojava (and probably nowhere) and whoever does not want to understand contradictions as part of a revolutionary process will not be able to draw a realistic way today. Rojava teaches the same, to question every little step, it forces you to problematize every attitude we have as people, and above all, it teaches you that $2 + 2$ is not always 4.

In Rojava, apart from the Kurds, there are a multitude of ethnic groups: each one with its culture, with its history (almost always bloody) and with its aspirations. Democratic Confederalism trusts that the aspirations of each ethnic group can coexist and cooperate under the same umbrella, and that is what makes the Kurdish liberation movement, far from being a nationalist movement, become a multi-ethnic liberation movement. There is no doubt that the Western powers have been fighting for centuries against the different ethnic groups that coexist in the Middle East, and this is why the multi-ethnic project is so radical, and directly undermines those aspirations of the Western powers. In Rojava, they strive to achieve an articulation without homogenization, and understand diversity as power, not as a limiting factor.

Already in the mid-1980s within the movement, what is now a reality in Rojava began to grow: women must be at the forefront of the revolution, and they must be treated and respected just like men. The Kurds understand that women were the first oppressed class, and with that oppression the civilization of domination begins and finally opens the door to capitalist domination. The liberation of women is very central, and also in a context in which, until recently, women were enslaved and traded. On the issue of gender, it can be said that there has been a true revolution, and that the women who have fought so hard to be recognized are not willing to put aside everything they have achieved. This is attested by the women of the popular self-defense groups (HPC-Jin) who so proudly walk with their kalashnikovs under their arms through the streets of Rojava.

There is no doubt that the party plays a fundamental role in shaping the new social system that has been developing in Rojava even before the 2012 revolution, but here is one of the keys to the project: the party is only necessary until it stops being necessary. And this is how it happens

in more and more communes of Rojava. More and more people understand that they themselves have to organize and defend their own territory, and they often proudly affirm that there is no party in their commune, and that they no longer need it on the daily life. The empowerment of ordinary people leads to a strong feeling of belonging to a struggle that changes the everyday life and shows the validity of self-organization as the main vector that runs through the project of the Democratic Nation.

More and more people understand that they themselves have to organize and defend their own territory,

And this is where the complex issue of leadership comes in. Since the inability shown by the movements in Europe to create any leadership, there is a lack of understanding for the figure and role of Abdullah Öcalan.

And it is common to hear how there are many comrades in Europe who call into question the entire project of the Democratic Nation because of the role that Serokati plays. Somehow, we have internalized the individualistic mentality so much, that in a banal attempt to fight against it, we focus on questioning leaderships that exist, that are operational and effective. Isn't it an exercise in the fight against individualism, that each person is diluted into a collective, in this case represented by an individual who, at a political level, transcends a human person?

Given the contradictions that Öcalan's highly personalized ideological leadership can generate, it is necessary to emphasize that the centrality that they gave to popular self-organization seemed very important to us. This concept has been present in many other revolutionary movements, but unfortunately it has often been relegated to the background while on the road to revolution. Many revolutionary organizations have been born with the sincere intention of dissolving, of ceasing to be necessary when society itself becomes organized under other values, but as they have taken more power they have lost confidence in the people they wanted to liberate, and they have believed necessary to concentrate power in the party cadres and in their own internal structures, as a measure to guarantee the "purity" of the movement. This, in turn, has led to authoritarian and dictatorial attitudes, which ultimately harmed the self-organization of the people, the awareness and responsibility of all people for their collective life.

In this sense, and with many contradictions, it seemed to us that Democratic Confederalism gave



more importance to the leadership of society in its own organization. We remembered how in the Mala Jin (women's house) of Qamishlo we had an experience that reflects, in our opinion, this contradiction between the role of the revolutionary cadres and the people. The Mala Jin women proudly told us how they already organized themselves, without the need for any cadre. In the first years of this project they received the help of cadres of the Kurdish movement, but their presence diminished while the neighbors themselves got more organized. Their pride they felt about this was combined with their appreciation for the support they received. A cadre organization that mobilizes to empower grassroots democratic structures unleashes a very promising transformative potential.

The Kurdish movement has succeeded in putting the focus of social transformation on people's mentalities. With necessary humility, they understood that each of us has the patriarchal capitalist system within us. To achieve a new world we must work incessantly to get rid of these negative characteristics, and learn (or relearn) to live in solidarity. This is a very long process, a very patient work, supported and empowered by the collective, but individual after all, since each person needs to live in their own flesh certain experiences that transform them. And in this sense it seems to us that the Kurdish movement has a very interesting balance between wanting to influence society and understanding the slow rhythms of social transformation.

It will be obvious to any revolutionary person that it is necessary to change the world. It is a moral imperative in the face of prevailing injustice. Even so, too many times in history some have wanted

to accelerate the transformation processes, with their eyes fixed blindly on the utopia that would come after them. It is a great lesson Öcalan draws, for example, from the defeat of the Soviet Socialist experiment. The taking of power by the Bolshevik vanguard made possible several changes in the political-economic structure, changes that sought to materially facilitate this transformation of the mentalities. But the urgency of that transformation, and obviously many other internal and external factors, led to the adoption of dictatorial and oppressive practices. And these ended up creating a bureaucratic-military apparatus that was more oppressive than liberating, always justified by the goodness of the communist society that they wanted to build.

Respect for the conscience of each person is essential to consider the rhythm that the revolutionary process should take. Freedom and justice cannot be achieved by taking power and commanding how the people have to live. Only when we have freed ourselves of these characteristics of capitalist modernity in our minds and society organizes itself, based on other values, in a free and natural (genuine) way, can we say that we have begun to overcome domination. For this reason, the influence that a revolutionary movement must necessarily exert should be directed towards the empowerment of the protagonists, towards the creation of conscious and responsible popular power, always bearing in mind the risk of falling into authoritarianism, an inherent danger in the construction of the power.

A society with a rich culture of giving and receiving criticism has a much better chance of success, more resilience, and a greater ability to find the way, by being able to question decisions made. And it is useful in several areas. On the one hand,

in the struggle, a self-critical attitude is necessary to reconsider the chosen path, invent new paths and, above all, not settle for what there is, avoiding egocentric and self-indulgent attitudes that have been so common in the past. A revolutionary movement that does not know how to get out of its bubble to make a really critical reading of its mistakes and successes has no other destiny than stagnation and dogmatic petrification.

On the other hand, if we understand that individualism, the patriarchal mentality, selfishness and the other characteristics of Capitalist Modernity exist within us, the work of polishing our mentality becomes essential. And it is, from the beginning, an exercise in humility, as it begins with admitting our own imperfection and the need to improve.

Actually, it is a sign of even greater strength. Generally, we do not have much facility to accept criticism, and we tend to defend ourselves, not wanting to see what they are saying to us. These are, among other things, mechanisms in our brain to avoid questioning who we are and living in peace. However, to achieve a real change in ourselves, we must overcome these habits and be open to criticism, to learn and to improve. The result of that process will be much more comforting, and with a much greater transformative potential, than the false tranquility with which we deceive ourselves by not seriously evaluating the criticism received.

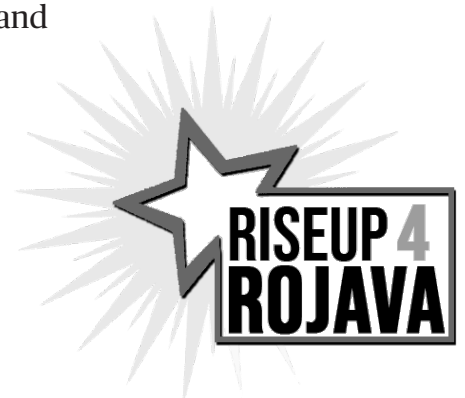
Learning from the Kurdish movement, criticism and self-criticism, like the construction of ethics, are collective processes. Criticisms are neither effective nor constructive, if they do not start from a common ethic, built and shared by a people, the basis of the new world for which we fight. It has been said many times in history that the revolution would bring the construction of the “new person”, of the new mentality. But the Kurds challenge this belief. Is this new mentality the result of the revolution, or is it perhaps the starting point? We must start from today to live that way, and to work our own ways of thinking, relating, feeling, with our collective ethics as a guide, and an aesthetic life as an example to follow.

From the camaraderie (Hevalty, in Kurdish) and commitment to the community, the members of the group have to help each other to identify and change their patriarchal, capitalist and dominant attitudes. A relationship of camaraderie is much stronger and deeper if we are able to criticize and be criticized and then improve. But this collective process must also be accompanied by personal

discipline to really attend these problems. And it is a continuous process, never ending, just as a Kurdish cadre warned us on our brigade. She had given up many things to fulfill the role she had in the movement, she was a reference for us, and an example of an aesthetic life. And she told us that, even so, she kept fighting with herself to get out of bed, she kept fighting her laziness, among other things, day after day.

Exercises like the Tekmil had come into our hands in text form several years ago. But none of us imagined the deep implantation of criticism and self-criticism in every inch of the revolution. Criticism and self-criticism are as naturalized in Rojava as drinking water is for everyone. It is part of a common sense in which mistakes are inevitable, just as it is inevitable to collectively correct mistakes on a day-to-day basis. It is here where the patient spirit of the Rojava revolution connects, where any peasant or worker has a duty to criticize anyone with political responsibilities. Based on a common ethic that has been forging for decades, criticism and self-criticism is a principle that helps the revolution not blur and deviate, for example, to authoritarian practices that have so characterized other revolutionary processes.

In Rojava we met a territory in struggle. A people that in a warlike context and so full of suffering is capable of smiling, of showing love for life, even when death is so close. The courage of so many women and men who have given everything so that the rest of us can be a little more free teaches us a lesson in humility. Things look different from our lives in Europe, from the material well-being of living in the imperialist center. In Euskal Herria (Basque Country) the memory of so many people who gave their lives for the revolution is still present, but, even so, it is a society that is increasingly individualistic, cynical, skeptical towards the idea of a profound social transformation. For this reason, seeing people who have the humility and the determination to be tools for a greater good reinforces hope in the human being and his capacity for liberation.





Kemal Pir

an internationalist example at the roots of the PKK

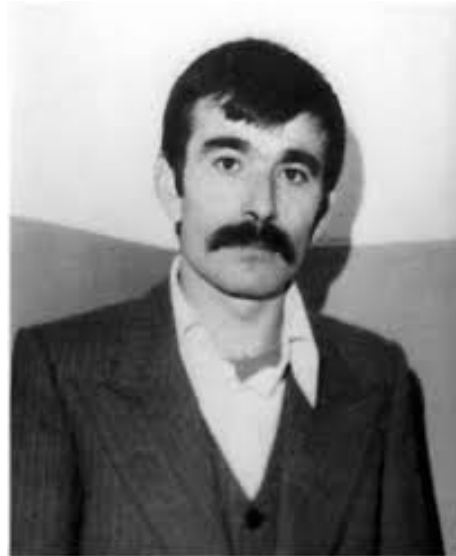
Kemal Pir was born in 1952 in the small village of Güzeloluk and grew up in a poor peasant family. His intellect and success in school allowed him to enter the university in the city of Ankara and start a higher education. Through his studies he eventually discovered Marxism-Leninism became involved in the revolutionary movement in Turkey. He quickly became a fervent Marxist and socialist:

“During my studies, I wanted to understand the world, to unveil its secrets, to expose its truths. I became a Marxist because I understood that inequalities stem from the capitalist system, so I am a socialist. However, knowing how to decipher the world was not enough for me. You have to be able to change it. And to change the world you have to fight...”

His determination and will to change the world and fight injustices pushed him to agitate within the student struggles and the Turkish revolutionary movement of the late 60s.

In 1972, he met Abdullah Öcalan, who was just released from a period of imprisonment in Mamak prison following the demonstrations that broke out after the death of Mahir Cayan (young Turkish revolutionary leader). Out of revolutionary solidarity with this former political prisoner, Kemal Pir and his friend Haki Karer who lived together in a small student apartment welcomed Öcalan without knowing him. During this time together, the three young students grew strong bonds of friendship, and debated many political issues together. They were impressed by Öcalan’s charisma and the accuracy of his analysis, and decided to join him in his revolutionary quest for the liberation of Kurdistan, despite Kemal Pir not being of Kurdish origin.

Kemal’s political convictions and his knowledge of the oppressive conditions the Kurdish people live push him to join this cause. As a result of this act of



internationalist solidarity, he became an example for revolutionaries and internationalists all over the world. Kemal maintained a political perspective that allowed him to embrace the socialist liberation struggle for all mankind, while actively working within the Kurdish national liberation struggle.

“Our movement, which emerged in 1972 and is known today as the PKK, is above all an ideological movement. It is not a nationalist movement, if it were I would not be part of it.”

But why didn’t Kemal Pir join one of the many communist/Marxist groups existing at that time, which at the time were much bigger and more powerful than the Kurdish movement?

Years of organizing within the Turkish left, resulted in Kemal developing a critical analysis of its fractious state at the time. He focused on the need to bring together the revolutionary forces and the popular masses:

“I joined the struggle against the system with the aim of bringing it down. The revolutionaries in Turkey came from the communist movement. Yet, the revolutionaries in 1974 were divided. None of the activists who came out of prison could assume a leadership role. Each one represented his own tendency, which resulted in further fragmentation.

Kemal Pir saw in the Kurdish liberation movement an opportunity, a way to change the world. In Öcalan's ideology he found a way to gather the people, the popular mass, to fight fascism and capitalism together.

He was a great leader, who would work tirelessly for the cause while still giving close personal attention to all who crossed his path. His knowledge and respect for the Kurdish culture soon gained him a lot of sympathy from the Kurdish society. Little by little he helped cultivate a true friendship between peoples Turkish and Kurdish people's. Ultimately, by fighting relentlessly against nationalism and chauvinism of all kinds he succeeded in fully embodying his principles and possibilities of internationalism.

"Through our ideological research we first convinced ourselves. Then, if we had to give three hours to convince a comrade, we gave 300 hours to persuade him".

His holistic vision of the struggle and his emotional intelligence allowed him to have a great influence on society. For him every person had value, women, men, youth, elders etc.

"Everyone and everything should join the struggle."

His growing influence soon attracted the attention of counter-revolutionary forces. In 1976, as the movement entered a phase of open conflicts with the feudal bourgeoisie, the mafia and social-chauvinism, as a result Kemal became a prime target. Turkish and Kurdish reactionaries also tried to neutralize him. His role as a vanguard and internationalist in a national liberation struggle awakened dark animosity from reactionaries attempting to uproot the seeds of brotherhood between peoples, which he was sowing everywhere.

In 1977, his close comrade Haki Karer was murdered by an undercover Turkish agent, who was posing as a Kurdish revolutionary leader. In the same year Kemal Pir was arrested and thrown into prison. He was tortured by the Turkish police who saw him as a traitor to the nation because of his commitment to the Kurds.

"The enemy feels free to torture us and destroy the most sacred values of humanity. But we revolutionaries are free to resist, and I will not waver. Even if it is only to waste an hour of their time. "

Thanks to his boundless determination he managed to escape and immediately returned to his political work.

In 1978, along with Abdullah Öcalan, Sakine Cansiz and about twenty cadres of the movement, he participated in the foundation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Following the assassination of Haki Karer, the movement decided to professionalize its political action and to constitute the vanguard organization necessary to carry out the revolutionary task of changing the world.

Shortly after the congress Kemal Pir was imprisoned once again. In prison he continued his revolutionary work by spreading the ideology of the movement to his fellow prisoners. He gave seminars to both political prisoners and common prisoners. He could not allow himself to waste time, and he always managed to transform any situation into revolutionary potential. Using his abilities he organized the prisoners among themselves to fight against the power of the prison system. Once again he managed to escape, taking with him a group of prisoners who would also join the freedom movement.

Back in hiding, he headed for Lebanon where the first PKK military training camps were located. There he received training in the use of weapons and later became a trainer for the other groups.

"Everyone and everything should join the struggle."

Back in Turkey, he travelled around the country to organize the struggle against the reactionary factions of the feudal bourgeoisie and the mafias that oppress the Kurdish population. Little by little he began to plan the struggle meticulously. In the autumn of 1980 he was arrested again while traveling under a false identity. He was soon transferred to the infamous military prison of Diyarbakir.

The torture sessions started again and he was soon joined by other leaders of the movement who were also arrested during the great raids that followed a military coup in Turkey. The conditions of detention in this prison were and still are simply inhuman, the soldiers in charge of the prison engaged in daily physical and psychological torture. Despite the situation Kemal Pir was able to remain a source of morale for his fellow prisoners. His ability to remain dignified even when he could no longer stand after a torture session inspired his fellow prisoners and became legendary.

During the collective trials, his political defense had a great impact on the political situation after the coup d'état in Turkey: "I do not give importance to the harshness of your sentence, on the contrary, I am honored because your judgment against me is above all political".

In 1982, following the sacrifice of their comrade Mazlum Döğün on Newroz day, Kemal Pir and other inmates of Diyarbakir prison started a hunger strike to denounce their conditions of incarceration. The pressure of the authorities increased against them. So they transformed their hunger strike into a death strike. Panicked the Turkish authorities used all kinds of pressure to make them abandon the strike. One day an officer asked Kemal Pir:

"Kemal, don't you love life?" "Kemal Pir replied proudly, "We love life so much that we are ready to die for it.".

The strike of death continued until his sacrifice. Locked up in the gloomy military prison of Diyarbakir, Turkish fascism wanted to silence him. Kemal Pir was able to turn this opportunity into

an example of resistance, his sacrifice not only helped to alleviate the conditions of detention of his comrades but also acted as a sounding board. They wanted to silence him and erase him from the political horizon, his resistance made him immortal and the example of his revolutionary commitment illuminates the path of the internationalist revolution.

"Kemal, don't you love life?"

**Kemal Pir replied proudly
We love life so much that we are
ready to die for it."**



*"Insist on socialism
is to insist on the human being"*



Contact:
legerinkovar@protonmail.com
Social media (instagram/reddit/twitter):
[@RevistaLegerin](#)