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What is Going On in Kurdistan?

Kurdish Anarchists

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Summer 1999

Retrieved on 2020-05-04 from struggle.ws
Published by Ates Hirsizi/KaosYayinlari in Turkey in 1999.

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a sudden increase of anarchism in Kurdistan. We regard ourselves as the passengers of a long journey.

On the other hand, our faith is strongly linked to the faiths of our world wide comrades. Our planet faces huge social problems as well as an intensive ecological destruction. All the living beings inhabiting this planet are suffering from the profound offensives of global capitalism. At such a stage of history, can we be so cruel to separate our Kurdistan for instance from our beloved Africa where our 800 thousands dearest sisters and brothers were massacred just in one week?

It may seem “unrealistic” for time being, but we also have a deal in the depth’s of our hearts. Instead of “United Independent Kurdish State,” we want a decentralised and cantonal free Kurdistan, which is the form that suits best to the original Kurdish life. A stateless and decentralised ecological life in harmony with the nature is our utopia of future Kurdistan. And we believe that the current nightmarish struggle of Kurdish people can only be crowned in this way; unconditional liberty in the embrace of the mountains!

laws since the Kurds made a good use of those laws which were originally designed for a typical European citizen who is some sort of a volunteer slave.

Kurds belong to the mountains! The grey and spiritless atmosphere of the modern urban life is absolutely suffocating for the Kurds who grew up in the embrace of fresh morning winds. Vast Kurdish masses had discovered the urban life especially as of the 70s. The modern way of life in the cities used to seem exciting in the beginning. But now Kurdish society starts to recognize the unbearable consequences of the technological madness. In brief, what we are saying is that the concept of a modern state finds supporters not among ordinary Kurdish people but only among a tiny politicians and intellectuals who crazily love the modernization.

So all these points we have been telling above, bring us to the conclusion that, anarchism has quite a number of common motives with Kurdish society. We can not pretend that there are no obstacles at all. Certainly there are. Private possession, phenomenon of religion, sexual exploitation over the women and the existence of Kurdish bourgeois classes are only few of those obstacles. But it still remains our firm opinion that the natural mentality of an ordinary Kurd has a suitable basis for anarchism. Anarchist roots exist at the very depth of Kurdish society. Thousands years old traditional life of Kurds used to be based on a chaotic colorfulness. The only question is how can anarchists manage to eliminate the authoritarian elements from this traditional life and how will we be able to refresh those decentralist roots.

However, we are aware of the fact that our anarchist approach towards Kurdistan, is not that much practical for the current process. Unfortunately, we are not strong enough to carry out certain projects for the achievements of our goals. Discovering anarchism only a few years ago, our principal work is naturally propagandistic. Therefore, we do not expect

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language by force. Kurds were sure that the state forces would not come to their villages for a peaceful and innocent aim. Living under the domination of various states, a great deal of rage has always existed in the hearts of Kurds towards the authority of the state. So, the police, soldiers and all kinds of state clerks are naturally hated by Kurds. Even nowadays, at the peak of national feelings, Kurdish patriots can not manage to convince Kurds that a police, a soldier, a prison can be used for the benefit of Kurdish society. Similarly, Kurdish patriots always complain about the fact that Kurds do not place sufficient attention on creating their own “national institutions.” It is certainly true that Kurds hate “institutions” be they national or foreign and it is not a lack at all, but it is the very essence of Kurdish mentality that is shaped by profound traditions of a decentralised society.

The decentralised social life of Kurdistan hardly protects its existence nowadays. Continuous state of armed struggle, assimilation of colonialist powers, forced immigrations and the increasing effect of the modernization have altogether spoilt the social life of Kurds. Most dynamic population of Kurdistan runs to the cities while remaining population also settles making links with the urban relatives. Similarly natural production is about to stop which is the fact that opens the doors for artificial products to enter Kurdistan, taking together the habits of modern consumption. But despite all these negative improvements, the attitude of Kurds towards the state and its institutions, continues to exist, though lot as strong as before. The Kurds may live in Istanbul, London, Paris and Frankfurt at the moment, but the very essence of their mentality is still preserved to some extent, despite the hard pliers of modern society. For the Kurds, the moral codes among themselves are much more important than the written laws of the constitution in whichever country they live. We must tell you that, due to the existence of Kurdish refugees there, most European countries have been obliged to change many of their constitutional

tures. With the real meaning of the word, Kurds never felt themselves connected to a centralized authority, namely the state. Ordinary Kurdish person does not know what “citizenship” means.

The natural orientation of Kurdish society has a tribal basis. Each tribe holds a certain area composed of several villages or sometimes small cities. All tribes maintain their own social life in harmony with surrounding tribes. Each tribal area is like a little country with its folkloric motives, with its own production of material necessities. One tribe can be famous with animal feeding while another would be professional at agriculture. So Kurdistan is the country of thousands similar tribes whose social life is based on a complete decentralization. This decentralization was to such an extent that linguistic characters used to exist even between neighbouring villages. These tribes from time to time used to face various problems and quarrels due to certain reasons. Even in such cases, until the recent years, they would not warmly welcome the intervention of the state forces. They would settle the conflicts among themselves. The worst would be armed clashes between the tribes which would be stopped by the intervention of other neighbouring tribes. You could fight with your neighbour and break the relations for a certain while. But on the first religious or folkloric feast, some old figures respected in that region would establish peace between you and your neighbour.

What we mean is the fact that, most institutions of the modern state had no place among Kurdish society. The principal functioning of social life in Kurdistan, was based on social tolerance and moral codes. Therefore, the “State” was an outer object in the life of Kurdish society. The state has always represented a dangerous negativity. Among the most majority of Kurdish society, the state was always understood as a “trouble” which should definitely be kept away. The state forces would only come to a village; to take young boys to the army or to collect taxes or to construct a school to teach them a foreign

What is Going On in Kurdistan?

Thousands of Kurdish demonstrators have shaken more than 30 cities of the world, when Adullah Ocalan, president of PKK (Kurdish workers Party) was recently captured in Kenya and brought to Turkey thanks to an operation possibly organized by Turkey, US, Israel and Greece. Receiving an intensive coverage from local and international media, Ocalan’s arrest we rise not only to numerous rumours, but also new discussions over Kurdish question as well a campaign of bombed attacks which have overshadowed the intoxication of Turkish government. Yet these tragic events are only the updated versions of a long-standing bloodshed that marked the Kurdish history.

130 Years Of Agony

Being one of the largest stateless nations of world, approximately 29 million Kurds are scattered in four major states, namely Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria with bits in European and former USSR countries. The fact that they have been denied simplest political and cultural rights is the very cause of Kurdish National Liberation Struggle estimated to be 130 years old.

The long and bloody adventure of Kurdish people has lasted till nowadays thanks to unimaginable pains as well as moral, material and social destruction. A few hundred thousands of killed and disappeared; tens of thousands villages and cities being burned and destroyed; forced migrations figuring out in millions; tens of thousands people tortured and imprisoned mainly in four colonialist states, namely Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria; and a completely destructed geography. As for those who were lucky enough to escape from this nightmarish adventure and survive, they are subjected to an unbearable poverty, extending from Arabic deserts to Western metropolises. Having left behind and far away their home land, the Kurds became

an exiled society trying to survive from day to day here and there. Furthermore, the thousands years old traditional life of Kurdish people has completely been spoilt and the doors have been opened for a moral and social alienation which already has reached to frightening levels.

Being the biggest part among others, Turkish Kurdistan has been the field of Kurdish National Liberation Struggle since 1920s. More than 40 major tribal insurrections took place on this part and all of them were suppressed with bloody massacres. By the 70s, the tribal approach of Kurdish National Liberation Struggle in Turkish Kurdistan was replaced with contemporary socialist patriotism and thus the struggle became massive by the 80s. Finally the armed resistance started by PKK in 1984 has opened a new page in Turkish Kurdistan and managed to bring about great improvements that could never be dreamed of. After 12 years of a hard struggle, by the 90s, PKK has turned toward the diplomacy and the integration to the international status-quo. Many speculations have been put forward regarding this turn of PKK. What makes things complicated to understand is that PKK proclaimed unilateral cease-fires; at the very moment when it was at the peak of its military struggle. Its long hesitation whether to continue armed struggle or to choose negotiation tables, resulted in the diminishing of its favourable military position which can be well considered as the beginning of Ocalan's journey towards Turkey. While Mr Ocalan is waiting for his trial, the long history of Kurdish national movement went under an intensive questioning. The cost of this struggle is clear to everyone. How about its gains? There lies a deep discussion, the very content of this article. Let us claim that the alleged gains of this struggle are not as great as they are seen. Due to some very clear reasons:

Firstly, all Kurdish bourgeois classes still maintain their existence. One can even talk about a regression in this regard; during the 70s, Kurdish bourgeois classes have received quite a good deal of blows from Kurdish socialist groups, but nowa-

nizations and the "fedupedness" of long years passed with armed struggle. These factors altogether prepare the basis for an urgent solution. Kurdish society naturally wants to escape from this impasse as soon as possible and at such a point, it does not really matter whether the type of solution is profitable or not. This is the essence of current process which facilitates the imposing of filthy policies to ongoing social movement. Thus, you can imagine the difficulty of expressing new thoughts.

The Anarchist Concept

Many if not all, think that anarchism has nothing to do with Kurdish society. While we carry on certain debates with Kurdish patriots, they always claim that anarchism is a luxurious idea for Kurdistan, as Kurdish society is very much backward. It is sad to see that this false argument sometimes makes a certain reflection on

on various comrades in anarchist ranks as well. Is anarchism really distant from the social life in Kurdistan? Nothing of the sort! Certainly Kurdistan is not a perfect bed for anarchism, just like any other societies aren't. But on the other hand, some very significant motives are hidden among the Kurdish society which represent great opportunities for the spreading of anarchist thought throughout Kurdistan. We shall examine some of them, trying not to fall into the traps of tribal romanticism.

When we put forward anarchism, we neither talk of a fabrication nor do we mean various imported prescriptions that are stranger to Kurdish society. The social life in Kurdistan itself carries certain trails which are in harmony with anarchism. First of all, Kurdish society has never recognized a social centralization although it lived within the boundaries of various states. Despite long periods of imposed assimilation, Kurds have always protected their own organizational struc-

danger. On the other hand, such a legalization of Kurdish structures may well integrate all the Kurds to existing system, reducing Kurdish state to a delusive notion. But let's just imagine that everything went all right and "Independent United Kurdistan" has pulled up a chair in the UN. What kind of changes can a Kurdish state bring about in the life of Kurdish people, other than turning them, very possibly, to Israeli-type oriental consumers of global capitalism? So what happened when many similar national projects gained victory many years ago in Russia, China, Cuba, Nicaragua, Algeria and Vietnam? Weren't the consequences of similar achievements in those countries disastrous enough? And today, what do Sweden, Norway, Holland, Belgium type welfare states look like? Aren't the societies of these countries suffering from a huge social alienation? So what is the point of importing and adopting already wrecked social systems in to Kurdistan? The joyful spirit of Kurdish society can not be ruined through the adventure of modernism. Consequently, the concept of an Independent Kurdish State is as hopeless as the results of peace talks.

Some Obstacles

Due to the absence of opponent voices, Kurdish movement suffers from a great deal of theoretical poverty. Any different perspectives towards the cause of Kurdish people are quickly considered to be "betrayal." Having captured the initiative by discarding the Kurdish revolutionaries, Kurdish politicians (now diplomats) can therefore run their manoeuvres without much difficulty. In this regard, a significant deal of massacres have been imposed to those who intended to break the current theoretical domination.

Several other factors can be mentioned; the chauvinism against the Kurds, the extra pollution of Oriental politics, continuous fratricide among heavily armed Kurdish orga-

days, all Kurdish bourgeois classes have strong links with all political groups under the pretext of patriotism.

The phenomenon of religion represents another setback. Again during the 70s, Kurdish socialist organizations had succeeded to reduce the effects of religion and even in certain regions, religious structures were about to be completely discarded. But nowadays, all the structures of religious exploitation have once again re-emerged under the name of "Patriotic Union Of Kurdish Devouts."

One other point on which a lot of stories are fabricated is the so-called liberation of Kurdish women. Nothing can be further from the truth! Some Kurdish women have joined the guerrilla forces in the mountains while others appeared with their traditional clothes in the demonstrations carried out throughout the cities. That is all about it. One has to be absolutely blind to call this a women liberation. If the sexual slavery could be abolished so easily, for example all Palestinian and Algerian women should of been free now. However we all know that the truth is quite opposite. Despite all the legends fabricated, Kurdish women continue to moan under a cruel sexual exploitation. The significant photos of women guerrillas appearing on Kurdish press, must not create any confusion. The slavery position of Kurdish women absolutely remains unchanged; at home, at the kitchen and at the bedroom, Kurdish woman continues to suffer from the universal male domination. Unfortunately, the faith of Kurdish women can not be changed neither with a few showpiece women organizations nor with the strange existence of Kurdish "nationalist feminists."

We have got a few words to say about academic and cultural works as well. Of course, we do not totally dismiss the importance of these works, especially of Kurdish press which emerged by the blood of so many people. In this regard, we respect all the sincere efforts of these valuable people. But nowadays, things are changing in a different way. Revolutionary opponent Kurdish press has now turned to "Kurdish Media."

What does that mean? It means a tight centralization and standardization in the fields of language, culture and as a whole in social life. Such a centralization shall inevitably kill the colorful cultural flora of Kurdish society. It will reduce the unlimited colorfulness of Kurdish society to a single-type shape. With other words, the variety among the Kurdish society shall be fitted in to a uniform. It is quite disputable whether this is a progress or some sort of an alienation.

A Brand-New Political Business; Peace Marketing!

The phenomenon of “peace” is the key word of the current process. Not a single day passes without the activities of peace defenders. European Parliament members, Non Government Organizations, Human Rights defenders and even representatives of various Churches are running around with attracting peace projects in their briefcases. All of them are dying to establish peace “at any cost.” We do not exactly know by whom they are appointed and financed but it is quite easy to understand that they represent the interests of some particular Western and European States. Of course, several exceptions can be made. In this regard, we believe the sincerity of some peace activists who devote themselves to stop the current bloodshed. It would be a brutality to mix up such honest efforts with those of the European States. But unfortunately, governments and politicians play the “peace” game better than anyone else.

By the way, what does peace mean? Very simple: The entire Kurdish movement which had risen for “Free Kurdistan” shall be integrated to existing regime of Turkish State against which Kurds have fought for so many years. If Turkey agrees to put an end to the question on the talk tables, most optimistically, there can be only two results;

- a. The right of political representation
- b. Various cultural rights serving the national identity of Kurds.

Anything else? Nothing!

As we all know, peace talks are always based on bloody bargains. Such negotiations can never solve any social questions, but rather they “postpone” the questions to an unknown future. Aren’t we aware of the results of similar successful peace talks? Look at Palestine and various Latin American countries; what came out of peace negotiations carried out in those countries? Certain political structures may profited from negotiations, but very hard to pretend that the peace has brought about significant changes in the peoples living in those countries. We are not waiting some sort of miracles, peace talks on Kurdish question shall inevitably come to the same end. Converted to handsome diplomats Kurds will a become the new players of endless diplomacy games. The outcomes of these games are so clear to all of us that any further comments will only be a waste of time.

What Does An Independent Kurdish Sate Mean?

There is one more question left: Is there any her choice apart from the filthy results of peace negotiations? Kurdish patriotic vanguards claim that there is one. While addressing to Kurdish public opinion Kurdish politicians always stress that peace talks are only a tool and their actual goal is the founding of an “Independent United Kurdistan.” They claim that once the national existence of Kurds has been accepted by Turkish State, the legalization of current Kurdish political structures will inevitably lead to a Kurdish state. Well, the claim itself is quite disputable as Turkish state is clever enough to foresee such a