

An Open Letter to Communists

Veli Dursun

AN İŞÇİNİN SESİ PUBLICATION
English Series 4

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Preface

Fraternal Parties may be aware of a growing split within the Communist Party of Turkey. Most probably, their information as regards the split derives either from a letter circulated to some parties by Comrade I. Bilen, General Secretary of the TKP, or from hearsay. Neither source of information can be regarded as accurate.

This *Open Letter to Communists* by Comrade Veli Dursun, a member of the Central Committee of the TKP, is a document of the Party struggle, written from the point of view of the Leninists within the Party. It throws light on the essence of the split and charts the course of events which comprise the first stage in the struggle.

Turkey is experiencing a revolutionary situation. The TKP is not equipped to meet the demands of the revolutionary situation. It is unable to play its role of vanguard of the working class in turning the revolutionary situation into revolution. This is due to the opportunism which has established its rule in leading organs of the party.

2 Preface

This failure of the leadership to carry out the tasks imposed on it by the revolutionary situation has set the Party on a course of deepening crisis. The refusal of the leadership to recognise the serious deficiencies in the Party's ideological and political struggle, and to take the necessary steps to correct and eliminate them has further degenerated into the stage whereby it is now seeking theoretical justification for its reformist and tailist policy. It is now denying the existence of a revolutionary situation outright, and engaging in a vicious campaign of slander and expulsions against the Leninists and their newspaper *Iscinin Sesi*, which pointed to the revolutionary situation and the tasks it imposes.

The attack against the Leninists is escalating to increasingly sharper forms, violating all norms of Party life and discipline. Aside from banning *Iscinin Sesi*, confiscating its publications from militants' homes and burning them, the opportunists are engaging in mass expulsions from the Party and even from democratic mass organisations. At no stage have the opportunists made any attempt to conduct a principled, open ideological struggle.

Comrade Dursun's *Open Letter* vividly shows how this anti-Leninist, liquidationist policy is practiced by the Political Bureau even in the Central Committee.

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the ideological and political issues involved, the reader is advised to consult the following books also published by *Iscinin Sesi* in English: *Turkey - Weak Link of Imperialism*, by R. Yurukoglu, *Party Discipline* by Cemil Silahtar and the *Third Programme of the TKP and our Tasks*, by R. Yurukoglu (to be published shortly).

Iscinin Sesi

**“...if the Central Committee had
banished the opposition
before the Congress
that would have been
an unpardonable thing”
(Lenin, *Collected Works*,
vol: 30, p.467).**

An Open Letter to Communists

Comrades!

The opportunists have thrust our Party into a deep crisis. In this situation and in order that the culprits may be singled out with greater ease, I consider it my duty to publicise certain facts. Their publication, which I undertake in a manner that takes great care to protect the security of the Party, can best be carried out by means of your newspaper *Iscinin Sesi* (the *Worker's Voice*), the publication of the Leninists in the TKP.

We have all been following very closely the internal party discussion which has continued and gained greater intensity over a period of many months. It has become obvious that the sole weapon the opportunists have been able to find in their endeavours to condemn the views put forward by *Iscinin Sesi* and to hold our cadres under their opportunist influence is "discipline". They say that *Iscinin Sesi* and its editor R. Yurukoglu flouted party discipline by publishing *Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism* without consulting the Party. How-

ever, as will become clear below, it is they themselves, treating the Party as their private preserve, who destroy Leninist discipline by applying the Party Rules only when and to the extent that it suits them.

The same charge of publishing articles and books without consulting with the Party levelled against R. Yurukoglu was brought against me. Before passing to the consequence of the charge and the steps which followed it, I shall first give a brief account of the event itself.

The attack against the Leninists, conducted through the joint action of various centrist and opportunist cliques in the TKP and by trampling underfoot both the Party Rules and any semblance of communist ethics, began and achieved its *present level* at the "high-level meeting of the Political Bureau of the TKP Central Committee with regional secretaries and those responsible for mass work". This meeting was announced in the July 1979 issue of *Atilim*. Some members of the Central Committee participated in the meeting in their capacity as secretaries of regional committees or as comrades responsible for mass work. The fact that the whole weight of the attack in this meeting was directed against the Leninists, while the subsequent statement issued in the name of the Political Bureau declared the main danger in the party to be "right opportunism", is striking evidence of the double standards of the opportunists.

In a manner that was certainly not necessitated by any considerations of "illegality", I was summoned to this meeting *by telephone* at approximately 6.30pm on *the evening before the meeting*, by someone not in a position of authority. I was told: "Be here at noon

tomorrow". It not being an easy task in such a short time to cover thousands of kilometres I was only able to arrive at the meeting one day after it had begun.

Although under obligation to do so, neither the Political Bureau nor the General Secretary informed me as to what had been discussed at the meeting the previous day. Indeed they insistently refused. From my comrades I learned that I had been criticised for breach of discipline in publishing my writing before showing it to the Party. (Let me stress that no ideological view was criticised, only "indiscipline".) The reason why I was given only one day's notice when many comrades had arrived at the meeting place at least one week before, thus becomes clear.

When I arrived at the meeting, I was taken for a "private" meeting with the General Secretary and someone to take the minutes. Shouting in anger, the General Secretary repeated the charge of "indiscipline". "You should have shown your writing to the Party first", he said. "Even if you do not trust the others, you should have sent it to me so that I could have read it", he said. "I had great affection for you", he continued, "but I see that, while the others have their eye on my place after I am dead, you have your eye on it even before I have died". For the Leninists, this last sentence was the end of Comrade Bilen, whom we had regarded as a revolutionary despite his many wrong views. No communist could so demean himself. (The General Secretary repeated the same idea in the Party press with the words: "They have come down from the mountain to drive out those in the valley".)

My answer to the words of the General Secretary

was as follows: "*First*, indiscipline cannot be brought forward as a criticism. In order for indiscipline to take place one must flout a decision that has been taken or a request that has been made known. But I have been writing articles for years and no one has ever told me that I should first show these to the Party. *Second*, I am a member of the Central Committee and the ideological bureau attached to it. It is the duty of this bureau to supervise all the party's written and spoken publications. Thus, to write and to supervise all other publications is my party duty as well. It is absurd to turn around and say, 'You should have shown to the party', to the very person who should have been shown, one of the very people to whom "showing to the Party" refers. *Third*, it may be both acceptable and useful for me to show you my writings insofar as you are a more experienced comrade. However, this is in no sense required by the Rules. These are my views. I am hearing for the first time that I am required to show my articles beforehand. If the Political Bureau takes such a decision, and informs me of it, I will act in accordance with that decision and henceforth send whatever I write, until the decision is discussed in the Central Committee and although I consider it absolutely wrong in every respect. However, I cannot be accused of indiscipline in regard to something I did not know".

The General Secretary paid no attention to what I said. He continued for some time to repeat, still in a fury, what he had said before. (Let me emphasize again that he brought forward no ideological criticism whatsoever. He criticised only "indiscipline".) Such an unfounded accusation, together with such insistent repeti-

tion of the same things regardless of the fact that I never once said I would not comply with what he said, indicates that the General Secretary's aim was other than to criticise "indiscipline". In order to stress this and the fact that what was at stake was not indiscipline but a difference of views, that the latter is what should be discussed, I said that the place for discussion was the meeting: "Yesterday you criticised me in my absence. Now, however, the comrades, members of the Central Committee, are strolling about in the garden. Let us meet and discuss the welfare of our Party in a comradely way". "No", was the answer. "Do not teach me how to lead. I will not turn this place into a debating club".

This attitude is the most concrete example of the "private preserve" mentality.

At a time when many members of the Central Committee were present and wandering aimlessly, comradely discussion in the proper body is prevented. The reason: full awareness of the emptiness of his arguments. Gag the voice of the Leninists for years even in the Party organs, and then when *Iscinin Sesi* has presented the problems to be judged by the people, call it indiscipline, and say that "discussion must be done in an organised way". This "private preserve" mentality is the greatest crime against the working class, and the responsibility for the present situation lies with it. It is this mentality which has prevented discussion, not only in the cells and organisations, but even in the Central Committee.

Towards the end of this "private" meeting, the General Secretary realised that he had fallen into great error by refusing to have ideological and political ques-

tions discussed in the proper body, i.e., in the meeting with members of the Central Committee. Thus, for the double purpose of redeeming this situation and of leading us into a dilemma, he brought forward the following piece of blackmail: "We can discuss these questions as well, but first you must admit that you have committed a breach of discipline". The Leninists strove hard for many years to have the ideological and political problems in the TKP discussed in a comradely way in the qualified bodies. They put up with many different injustices. However, this does not now make it possible for anyone to demand that we admit to a guilt that is not ours in order that these problems may be discussed.

The "private" meeting with the General Secretary thus came to an inconclusive end. The comrade who was taking the minutes became very tired however.

That day the Political Bureau finished the individual meetings it was conducting with various comrades.

The following morning it was my turn for a meeting with the Political Bureau (I had prepared the speech I would deliver the night before, making two copies with the thought that one would be held for the minutes. In the event it was not requested and both copies stayed with me). Even the way the room was organised betrayed the subconsciousness of the Political Bureau members, who sat in a semi-circle the open side of which was occupied by a single empty chair. Here would sit the "accused".

The most striking aspect of this meeting was the fact that, aside from one or two words of intervention, *none* of the Political Bureau members spoke at all. Only

the General Secretary spoke, and he continuously. Either such a decision had been taken, or the comrades did not want to be burdened with the responsibility later. Whatever the case, it was obvious that this meeting too would not be the place for a genuine comradely discussion. As plaintiff, prosecutor and judge, they had reached a verdict long before.

The General Secretary repeated his views of the previous day (all in regard to discipline), at first in a milder tone but gradually proceeding to a tone even angrier than that of the previous day. Then they asked whether or not I had anything to say. Taking it out of my pocket, I read my "defence". This was not as easy as you read this sentence now. The General Secretary put forward objections and shouted at every sentence. At one point it became necessary to issue a rather strong warning.

On finishing my speech, I was told: "All right, you leave and we will inform you of our decision".

After a lapse of only an hour, they called again, this time to read the Political Bureau's decision and the considerations on which it was based. They did not hand over a written copy. The decision stated that by decision(!) of the Political Bureau, Veli Dursun is stripped of his membership of the Central Committee. He continues to be a member of the Party. The considerations on which this decision was based consisted of a list of the following accusations: "indiscipline", distorting Party policy and the views of the General Secretary, belittling the struggle against fascism, distorting the meaning of the "committees for security of life", and adopting an attitude detrimental to the unity of the

international communist movement.

Up until and including the reading of this decision, they brought forward no ideological criticism of any kind, criticising only various imaginary instances of "indiscipline". They criticised a member of the Central Committee at a meeting in which he did not participate while refusing a meeting in which he could participate. Neither in the "private" meeting nor at the later Political Bureau meeting, did they mention anything other than discipline. Then, when they exceeded the authority of the Political Bureau by expelling a member from the Central Committee, then they included accusations of an ideological nature in their considerations. The name for this behaviour is not communism, but Byzantine intrigue.

After reading the decision and the considerations on which it was based, they asked, "Do you have any last words?" Expecting a demoralised speech, their looks betrayed their feelings of revenge. These comrades were never able to understand the Leninists. They did not break us, but with their Byzantine schemes confirmed our suspicions and put an end to our doubts. They enlightened us completely: "I wish you success".

So passed the "meeting of the Political Bureau of the TKP Central Committee with regional secretaries and those responsible for mass work".

In coming to this meeting convened by the Political Bureau, I was accompanied by three other comrades holding positions of authority in the area where I worked. One of these comrades was the secretary of the local Party Committee, one a member of the Party Committee and secretary of the press publica-

tions bureau attached to the Committee, the other a candidate-member of the Party Committee. These comrades came for the purpose of learning about the recent developments in the Party and stating the views of the Party organisation (one of the strongest organisations of the TKP) of which they were the administrators. They were awaiting the end of the meeting elsewhere, at the place referred to as "the bank of the river" in the preface to S. Ustungel's *Savas Yolu (Road of Struggle)*, entitled "Two Generations".

When our meeting had finished, the General Secretary left by car. At the same time, they informed me that I would leave in half an hour. I left in another car to meet my comrades. Purely by coincidence, since the car in which I was travelling must have gone at a greater speed than the first car, I reached the "bank of the river" at the same moment as the General Secretary. As we had been going to the same place, we could have gone in the same car. If there was to be a discussion with the comrades, I could have waited elsewhere. But no, the General Secretary wished to speak with my comrades before they had had the opportunity to see me. His aim was to create dissension among the Leninists by exploiting, if he could, the deep affection we had felt for him in previous years. Petty tricks.

Let me add a romantic touch to the situation. The decision to expel Veli Dursun from the Central Committee was taken on the 6th anniversary of the 1973 advance. This coincidence signified the end of the six-year period and the beginning of a new period.

There is a second coincidence, this one related to the afore-mentioned preface ("Two Generations") to

S. Ustungel's *Savas Yolu*. In this preface, which he wrote in September 1974, S. Ustungel said the following: "The bank of a river. Not the Sakarya. There are many rivers in this world... My eyes peer into the sleepy water. The swans sway as if in a cradle... We sat side by side, uniting in ourselves two generations. We are talking about the Party, yesterday and today... One word brings another. In which direction are the waters flowing? Memories are being triggered in my mind. Our young bloods all have large moustaches... Is this tall one not a relation of Comrade Suleyman who manned the machine-gun at the Geyve pass?.. And this honey-eyed woman comrade, sitting quietly and listening attentively, is this not comrade Zekiye who carried the wounded on her back during the battles in the Haymana marshes?... The dawn is breaking. We rise from our place. The traveller must be on his way. There is work awaiting all of us. We embrace and separate, to meet again... The bank of the river is cool. Four comrades walk along it..."

The years passed. It is the same river-bank. The weather is different. Dark clouds fill the sky. One cannot see for the dust in the wind. The rain is pouring down. Again five people have met. But this time it is different. One of the four young comrades has joined the ranks of the opportunists. His place has been taken by the candidate-member comrade. The author of the preface and the three other comrades are the same. A few disjointed words. It is clear that our thoughts go in different directions. A story of friendship, the same characters... It finishes where it began. We rise from our place. The traveller must be on his way. There is work awaiting all of us. This time we part without embracing:

to meet at a Congress. We have plunged into the storm... The bank of the river is cool. Four comrades walk along it.

The Political Bureau Decision Contravenes the Rules It is Invalid

1) My behaviour neither (a) hindered the implementation of any decision that had been taken, nor (b) obstructed the party's unity of action, nor (c) sought to withhold from the party the financial resources of the local party organisation. On the contrary, my behaviour was in full conformity with article 36 of our Rules.

Article 36 of the Rules states as follows: "Every member of the Central Committee both shares in the collective and also has personal responsibility for solving the problems which confront the party and for carrying out his own duties. The CC combines collective with personal responsibility".

For this reason, the Political Bureau's decision for "expulsion" contravenes *in its essence*, not only the Rules, but more importantly, the Leninist understanding of discipline.

2) The Rules explicitly state the method by which a member of the Central Committee may be expelled from that body. It is very clear that the Political Bureau is unable to do this on its own.

Article 33 of the Rules states that "The Central Committee is the supreme organ of the party in the interval between congresses", thus declaring in an indirect manner that, outside of a congress, only the Central Committee itself can expel one of its members.

The Political Bureau cannot relieve a CC member of his duties given that the CC is the superior body which itself selects and supervises the Political Bureau. The Political Bureau does not have the authority to expel a member from the Central Committee. Articles 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37 of the Rules are clear enough as to leave no room for interpretation on this question.

Blinded by anger, the Political Bureau itself openly flouted our Rules and *committed a breach of discipline* in expelling(!) Veli Dursun from the Central Committee. It will have to account for its conduct at a congress.

3) Article 45 of our constitution states that "Disciplinary measures are to be taken *at a party meeting* and face-to-face with the person being disciplined. If the latter is not present at the meeting or if his presence is not desired for reasons of secrecy, the decision may be taken in his absence" (our emphasis).

In addition, article 42 states that "the mistakes and causes are to be set out" when disciplinary measures are taken.

When taken together, these two articles make it clear that the decision to expel a member of the Central Committee — and this only in extraordinary circumstances — is to be taken by the CC itself at a CC meeting where the matter will be discussed in the presence of the given comrade. This is outside of "reasons of secrecy".

The Political Bureau insistently prevented discus-

sion of the matter at a CC meeting which I would attend. Such a meeting was prevented even though there were no grounds for restrictions due to "secrecy" (for I was present at the time and moreover had met all the comrades previously) and despite countless reminders on my part. The Political Bureau flouted the Rules in this matter as well.

By reason of the second and third articles we have presented above, the Political Bureau's decision contravenes the Rules, the understanding of communist discipline and party practice *from the point of view of form as well as content*.

4) There is more. In the months following the adoption of this decision, the General Secretary sent letters to many fraternal communist parties in which he informed them that I and my comrades had been expelled from the party. The same rumour was circulated in Turkey.

Had such a decision been taken, the constitution requires that the persons and organisations concerned be informed. However, no such information was received either by myself or the organisation they claim to have expelled.

5) Had such a decision been taken, how and by whom was it taken? Leaving aside the matter of informing about the decision, the very taking of such a decision is itself a breach of discipline and the Rules.

Article 45 of the Rules states that "The decision to expel a member or candidate — member of the Central Committee from the Party either temporarily or altogether is valid only if adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the Central Committee. The Central

Committee is to inform the congress of the decision. Disciplinary measures are to be taken at a party meeting and in the presence of the person being disciplined”.

It follows that for the decision of expulsion from the party to be valid, this decision must (1) have been taken at a Central Committee meeting attended by myself and (2) have been adopted by a two-thirds majority. However, since the meeting described above, there has been no CC meeting, with or without my participation, at all.

6) Let us suppose that after I left that meeting, the Political Bureau had gathered together the CC members strolling in the garden and the comrades present had endorsed its decision to expel me from the Central Committee. Again it is invalid; again it is contrary to the Rules for:

(1) That meeting was not a CC meeting, nor was it announced as such in *Atılım*. It was a discussion meeting between some CC members and the Political Bureau.

(2) No CC meeting can take such a decision in my absence.

7) All that I have said above are evidence of the gravity of the breach of discipline committed by the opportunists. The decision they took is not valid. It is an instance of their cliquish behaviour. Even leaving all these aside for the moment, supposing that everything had been done properly, still the matter must be put before and discussed at a congress in accordance with article 45 of our Rules. Moreover, as there is no obstacle of “secrecy”, they must accord me the possibility of attending the congress and defending myself

there with a view to rectifying the decision in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the Rules.

8) One last point. At the first congress to be convened, the section of article 45 of the Rules dealing with the expulsion of a CC member by decision of the CC must be amended. Even though we are compelled to comply with this article until it is amended (that we have so complied is clear from the articles cited above) let us be clear in our own minds that this section is contrary to democratic centralism.

In their efforts to combat our arguments, the opportunists have referred to the 10th congress of the RCP(B), declaring that the question of party discipline was given final form at that congress. However, at this congress Lenin said that a member could not be expelled from the CC *outside a congress*. In extraordinary circumstances a CC member may be expelled by a meeting at which members and candidate members of the CC, as well as members of the control commission, shall have equal vote. Lenin stressed that such a case could not be raised to the level of a principle. He said as follows: "No democracy or centralism would ever tolerate a Central Committee elected at a Congress having the right to expel its members" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol.32, p.258).

It is clear from this quotation that our constitution has always included the 7th article which Lenin openly declared at the 10th Congress of the RCP(B) to be contrary to democratic centralism, which was included as a necessary measure to be resorted to only in extraordinary circumstances, and which Lenin did not want published among the documents of the congress.

The inclusion of such an article in our own Rules is evidence of nothing other than their fear of the organisation itself and the underhanded methods to which they are resorting in order to maintain their hold on the leadership. In fact, the Central Committee has no authority to expel one of its members. This authority belongs to the congress.

The opportunists are the main enemies of democratic centralism and Leninist party discipline.

The Fifth Congress must be Convened as Soon as Possible

“...if the Central Committee had banished the opposition before the Congress that would have been an unpardonable thing” (Lenin, *Collected Works*, “Ninth Congress of the RCP(B)” (1920), vol.30, p.467).

Except for very short intervals, since its foundation the Communist Party of Turkey has not been able to function as a genuine party. We are not going to discuss the reasons for this here. However, we must draw the reader's attention to what has been the inevitable result of this situation. Since the TKP did not experience genuine party life over long historical periods, *neither was it able to experience genuine democratic centralism*. It experienced neither genuine inner-party democracy, nor genuine proletarian discipline. The

Party's 4th Congress was held in 1932, 48 years ago. Those who led the party during those 48 years were not leaders chosen by the organisation.

We do not know whether one could find a similar situation in any other party. We have not heard of such a thing and it seems highly unlikely.

It is inevitable that the poison seeds of bourgeois ethics should sprout up in a party that has held no congress for 48 years. The convening of a congress cannot prevent such poisonous growth in itself; without it, however, that growth is inevitable. A party which has held no congress for 48 years cannot fight. Neither a party nor the leading cadre of a party which has not washed its dirty linen in public, which has not rendered account of its activities to the working class, can offer genuine leadership. The time to correct this mistake has long since come and gone.

Another factor militating today for the rectification of this mistake without delay is the struggle between bolsheviks and mensheviks which is taking place in the party. We shall be unable to counter the danger of a split in our party unless we solve our problems by convening a genuine congress. If a split should take place it will be such as to become deeper with time and to have a lasting effect on the communist movement in Turkey.

With their "After me the deluge" mentality, the opportunists are heading in that direction and endangering the future of the Party for the sole purpose of maintaining their rule.

After a lapse of 48 years our Party must now return to democratic centralism and convene its 5th

Congress as soon as possible.

Article 39 of our Rules makes the following stipulations in regard to the convening of a congress:

"The supreme organ of the Communist Party is its General Congress. The Central Committee convenes the party's regular congress once in every four years. Should an obstacle arise due to the severe strictures of illegality, the Central Committee may postpone or move the Congress forward. The interval between congresses must not exceed 6 years. If this period is exceeded the provincial committees may demand that the Central Committee convene a congress within 6 months. If the Central Committee fails to do so, a two-thirds majority of the provincial committees may convene a congress. Delegates to the congress are selected at congresses of the provincial committees. Should reasons of secrecy so dictate, the Central Committee may put forward candidates chosen from the militant cadres".

Let us enumerate the conclusions to be drawn from this article:

1) A Party congress must be convened once every four years. This interval may be as much as six years due to "reasons of severe illegality". However, it cannot be as much as 48 years.

Seven years have passed since the 1973 advance i.e., since the constitution began to operate in theory. Thus, the interval has been excessive even by the

standards of the comrades who wrote the Rules and put them into operation.

2) If the interval between congresses exceeds 6 years, the provincial committees can demand that the Central Committee convene a congress. As far as we know it is not only one or two provincial committees which have presented their demand for a congress to the CC. In this respect as well the CC is obliged to take action.

3) If the congress is not convened within 6 months after the provincial committees' demand, a two-thirds majority of the committees may convene the congress. This is a very important point which illustrates how the opportunists have distorted democratic centralism to suit their own purposes. Referring to reasons of secrecy, they have violently opposed and are still setting up obstacles to relations between the provincial committees themselves. Efforts to establish such relations, they stigmatize as breach of discipline. They have bound each individual committee to themselves. This is further evidence of their fear of the organisation.

Relations established among the provincial committees themselves play a very important role in the work of the party. For example, the constitution says that "a two-thirds majority of the provincial committees may convene a congress". If these committees are to have no relations among themselves, if they are allowed to express their demands only to the CC and not to other organs having the requisite authority, and if the CC does not want a congress, what then is to happen? Even if all the provincial committees, let alone a two-thirds majority, demand a congress, how are they

to know that they have achieved the required majority if they are not allowed to communicate with each other? It would follow that the provincial committees must work in close relation with each other.

Now let us suppose that 6 months have passed and the committees are convening the congress. How and where will it meet? How will the delegates be selected? How will security be ensured? Answers to all these questions as well demand that the provincial committees communicate with each other in their work.

4) Congress delegates are to be selected at congresses of the provincial committees. Should secrecy present any difficulties, the CC is to propose candidates from among the militant cadres. But again these candidates are to be selected by the provincial committees. It is not compulsory to select the candidates put forward by the CC (If the CC is one that has won the trust of the organisation, of course its candidates will be approved).

If we sum up the tasks set for us by article 39 of our constitution from both the moral and constitutional points of views, a congress must be convened as soon as possible. The intervals enumerated by the Rules were exceeded long ago. Every communist and every provincial committee which hopes that our Party will come out of this crisis strengthened by comradely discussion must demand that the CC convene a congress without delay. A significant number of provincial committees have already done so. More important, these are the key organisations of the Party. The place they hold in the Party is a thousand times greater than their number. In forwarding their demands for a

congress to the CC, the provincial committees must establish relations among themselves in a manner that does not undermine secrecy and they must follow up their demands. Meanwhile, they must not forget that it is their task to elect the delegates who will attend the congress.

Comrades,

The revolutionary situation in Turkey has been reflected within the Party by the failure of its leadership to meet the demands the situation imposes. The main responsibility for the crisis in our Party lies with the opportunist leading alliance which, failing to apply the Party Rules, has openly trampled it underfoot: with the *Political Bureau*.

Lenin called for open discussion in full view of party members and the working class. In his view the central organ of the party must be a platform for this type of discussion. The Political Bureau of the TKP Central Committee on the other hand has resolutely avoided discussion of problems even in the CC, let alone in full view of the working class or the party as a whole! It has treated *Atilim* as its private property and prevented the functioning of party organs.

Article 3 of our Rules considers it a basic duty "not to allow anyone to distort events". I have written the present open letter in order to fulfil this duty and in consideration of the militants loyal to Leninism. The majority of these comrades, who share the Leninist views but do not know the background of developments, are saying, "If only we had discussed these problems in the party and its organs". What I have related here is only a tiny example of the bourgeois-style injustices

which have been meted out to the Leninists for years. At the same time it proves just how patient, disciplined and constructive has been (and still is) the behaviour of the Leninists over those long years. It shows also the plotting and scheming mentality of our opponents. The Leninists chose the road of open discussion in full view of the masses when confronted with the inconclusiveness of their many years of struggle to activate the Party organs and channels.

Comrades! Militant Comrades! The opportunist-centrist Political Bureau is now trying to turn you against your Leninist fellow party-members and comrades and to prevent discussion of the problems on an ideological level. They are hoping in this way to ensure that anger, ambition and the consequent formation of a separate camp in the party will prevail, while the ideological rendering of accounts is forgotten. Do not fall for this trick. Do not look with hostility on your comrades who for years honourably shouldered the weight of this movement. They have no such feelings towards you whom they call comrade. They are themselves the TKP.

Communists! The obstacle in front of the Leninist unity of the TKP is a small opportunist group. It is the Political Bureau which holds the leadership in its hands by trampling on, rather than applying, the constitution. We are obliged to overcome this obstacle and working together we shall do so.

Long Live the Communist Party of Turkey!

Long Live Leninism!

Comrade Veli Dursun's "Defence" before the Political Bureau of the TKP Central Committee

Comrades,

I was informed neither about this meeting nor about the criticisms that have been made against us. I was called here at the last minute and came unprepared.

At a meeting conducted in my absence, a Political Bureau Report was read and criticisms were levelled against me. This report was not read to me nor was I informed about the criticisms made. First I must criticise this.

Both at yesterday's meeting with the comrade General Secretary and this meeting with the Political Bureau, one charge was levelled against me in a great rage: indiscipline. Not to give importance to ill-temper, I shall concentrate on the essence of the matter. What I shall say consists of three parts: (1) The question of discipline; (2) ... (This second part cannot be revealed for reasons of security); (3) The stagnation in the Party.

The Question of Discipline

Comrades, in order for a certain behaviour to be considered indiscipline it must have flouted a particular decision, a standard practice or the constitution itself. In which of these categories is the charge you have levelled against me? You say: "You should have shown your writing to the Party beforehand". Since there have been no Central Committee meetings and those which do take place are few and far between; given that I am a member of the ideological bureau and that you obviously are not referring to this bureau when you say I should have shown my writings "to the Party", it would seem that you are referring to the Political Bureau. If this is the case, let me ask: is there a decision to the effect that written publications must first be shown to the Political Bureau? No, there is not. Even if there were such a decision, has this been the standard practice? No, it has not. Another question: which article of the Rules contains such a stipulation? There is no such article.

Let us leave all of these aside. If you had told me before that "the Political Bureau will read your writings beforehand", then perhaps you would have had at least some moral right to put forward such a charge today.

As you have seen, the charge of indiscipline is unfounded and illogical. That is as much as I am going to say in regard to your situation.

Aside from this, I would like to say a few words about the general theoretical content of the idea of

discipline. In this way, if nothing else, it may enable you to understand the path I shall take after leaving here.

The essence of party discipline is ideological discipline. Ideological discipline comes first and foremost. Without it there can be no organisational discipline in the real sense of the term. In such a case discipline would become bureaucratic discipline.

Discipline does not obstruct the mechanism of correcting mistakes or prevent open discussion among all party members. On the contrary, Leninist discipline ensures the protection of the mechanism of correcting mistakes in the proper way. It ensures also that open discussion among all party members be conducted in a manner that does not harm but benefits the party. Bureaucratic discipline on the other hand, prevents comradely discussion of problems and obstructs the Party's path of development.

The Communist Party is an organisation which accords no room for cliques or factions. The formation of factions is inevitable, however, where problems are not discussed or where discussion assumes the character of a debating club. For this reason, both liberalism and bureaucratic discipline are the surest ways of creating factions in the party. By avoiding these two mistakes and by ensuring ideological unity, Leninist discipline makes cliques and factions in the Communist Party impossible.

If we do not want to become bureaucrats, if we do not want to stagnate and decay, the Communist Party of Turkey must be as centralised as possible in implementing decisions, i.e., in unity of action, and as

democratic as possible in the evolution of ideas.

A breach of discipline takes place when a party member (1) obstructs the implementation of a party decision; (2) disrupts the party's unity in action, or (3) withholds from the party the financial resources of his local party organisation. If none of these takes place, there can be no question of breach of discipline on the part of a comrade who has publicly expressed his views on any ideological or political question.

What I have stated here is Lenin's understanding of discipline. Let me give an example. Following the Third Congress, the Mensheviks put forward such a rule: A party member may defend his views inside the party on the condition that they accord with the constitution and the programme. Outside the party, however, he may put forward no view which contradicts the party leadership. ... Lenin criticised these Menshevik ideas as a bureaucratic mentality and himself defended the following view: Both inside the party and at public meetings open to the people, a party member may declare his views regardless of whether or not they contradict those of the leadership. On the other hand, no party member is allowed to put forward views which are detrimental to or designed to obstruct a certain action or the fulfilment of a certain decision, either within or outside the party.

Lenin applied this view throughout his entire life, not only during the period mentioned above. Had he acted otherwise, he would perhaps been able to write only one pamphlet rather than 45 volumes.

This is my understanding of discipline. What I have written undermines neither the Party's unity of

action nor any decisions taken for action. On the contrary, it puts forward views on topics on which no views have been put forward to date. If these views are mistaken, let the correct ones be stated. Our party will advance in such a way. If a number of criticisms which are out of place and unjust in form are levelled, while there is no serious appraisal of the substance, this attitude will obstruct the development of the party. If accusations of "indiscipline" take the place of discussion on the content of what has been written, this attitude will obstruct the development of the party.

Leave aside writing, it is my duty to supervise *all publications* of our party.

(.....)

Let me also say this: anyone with a little political experience can see that it is ideas which underlie the charge of "indiscipline" that has been raised today. Everyone and everything is clear. Those involved in the most serious right deviation are the ones who are most accusing me of "indiscipline". If we want to advance the party, why do we not discuss ideas? Why are we discussing with the Political Bureau here while many CC members are passing the time relaxing outside? Is it not the duty and right of CC members to participate in this meeting?

In conclusion, let me say that I have never committed a breach of discipline against my party. To accuse me of "indiscipline" shows that the Leninist understanding of discipline has not established itself in our party.

In publishing the writing in question, I acted in

the beliefs I have summarised above. I maintain these same beliefs today. However, if the majority of my comrades here, i.e., the majority of Political Bureau members, say, "You have committed a breach of discipline", *I will remain silent* even though I do not share and I have sharply criticised their view. I will remain silent until the next CC meeting. I know that facts are stubborn. They cannot be swept under the carpet. My only wish is for the integrity and success of our party and its ability to make the revolution.

The Stagnation in the Party

There has been stagnation in our party since the 1 May 1977. Slowly a *crisis* is developing. We must see the truth, not deceive ourselves, and take the necessary measures.

A significant section of party comrades is gradually emerging from its period of apprenticeship. The problems are multiplying every day. We shall see that this crisis will become deeper and more violent with the new rise that is bound to take place in the revolutionary situation.

The main cause of the stagnation is the low ideological level and the failure to point out goals corresponding to the revolutionary situation. In particular, it is the fact that our hands have been tied in the face of the non-monopoly bourgeoisie since the coming to power of the Republican People's Party

government.

There is a new situation in our country. But we are still trying to get by with general, rounded-off words. Thus it is impossible to distinguish one issue of *Atilim* from another. Let me give two examples in this respect.

We keep saying: "We support every forward step on the part of the RPP while criticising its every mistake". The RPP came to power, so much time passed, it did this and that, where are your criticisms? We are still singing the same song. Then criticism is concrete; it is supported with action.

We keep saying: "Every method of struggle can be used". But no one is asking us that. Anyone can find that in any book. The working class will lead the people. The TKP will lead the working class. And we will lead the TKP. *Today*. So let us use these methods.

There is no ideological unity in the Communist Party of Turkey. There are serious errors on the state and revolution, advanced democracy, the peaceful road, revolutionary situation, the front, the Kurdish question, revolutionary tactics, the "national bourgeoisie" and other subjects. The cause of the stagnation in our party is the lack of Leninist ideological unity.

I called attention to the lack of ideological unity in our party and the fact that this would lead to the present situation in my speech at the CC Plenum. Much time has passed since then. Unfortunately the situation has deteriorated rather than improved. The ideological confusion is much greater today.

The legal publications of the party are in a terrible state. *Atilim* is eclectic, changing with the wind. One

page contradicts another; one paragraph contradicts another in the same article.

My proposal is that we take speeches and discussions out from behind closed doors and put them before the militants. Let us create a lively and constructive ideological atmosphere.

Let us make the Congress, Conference, Plenum, CC meeting, Political Bureau meeting, as well as our other high-level meetings, into *genuine* forums for discussion. We shall never solve the great problems confronting us with 10-minute "pronouncements" that everyone takes out of their pockets, having prepared them beforehand as assigned topics.

Let us concern ourselves, not with individuals, but with ideas.

Comrades, let me call your attention to one truth that all of us should know: *In the long run organisational unity will disappear where there is no ideological unity.* Today Turkey needs a Leninist TKP much more than it ever has before. Let us act accordingly.

Long Live the Leninist Communist Party of Turkey!

Long Live the Revolutionary Unity of the TKP!

Cemil Silahtar

Party discipline



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