

Important Articles from

## **BOLŞEVİK PARTİZAN**

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12 heroic revolutionaries whom we lost in the death fast will live on in the struggle for revolution as symbols of determination! Their murderer, the fascist State will be called to account through the revolution!  
On Hunger-Strike and Death Fast as Forms of Action...

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## On Hunger-Strike and Death Fast as Forms of Action...

**R**evolutionary prisoners in the dungeons of fascism have once more put up an exemplary resistance... Once more the ruling classes were forced to retreat in the face of the determination of revolutionaries who accepted death there, where fascism feels itself strongest, and objectively seen is also strong. Once more the revolutionaries emerged without defeat from the fight for their revolutionary dignity and identity in prisons where the class struggle proceeds most sharply and the ruling classes have so many advantages.

Representatives of the ruling classes which at first refused all negotiations in the face of the hunger strike, was considering it at to, were forced by the determination of the revolutionaries who had turned the hunger strike into a death fast on 3 July to sit with the representatives of revolutionary prisoners at the negotiation table and reach an agreement.

The revolutionaries had to make very heavy sacrifices to reach this agreement. We lost 12 revolutionaries, ready to give their life for the cause of revolution!



Many revolutionaries will carry their life long the marks of the death fast in the form of different physical ailments.

From the imprisoned members of *DHKP-C*, *A. Berdan Kerimgiller*, *İlginç Özkeskin*, *Müjdat Yanat*, *Yemliha Kaya* and *Ayçeİdil Erkmen*; from *MLKP*, *Hüseyin Demircioğlu*; from *TİKB*, *Ulaş Hicabi Küçük*, *Tahsin Yılmaz*, *Osman Akgün*; from *TKP (ML)*, *Aygün Uçur*, *Ali Ayata* and *Hayati Can* are no more among us.

*But they will live until eternity as symbols of revolutionary determination, self-sacrifice, loyalty to the cause of revolution in our fight. They have sacrificed their lives in struggle for a just cause.*

*They are buried in the hearts of all workers, toilers, revolutionary people in North Kurdistan-Turkey and the whole world, whose hearts beat for a new world without exploitation and oppression. They will never be forgotten!*

Neither will the murderers of these 12 revolutionaries, the ruling classes and their political representatives who, as the agreement has shown, could have prevented the death of these prisoners with small compromises!

*The task is to transform the sorrow we feel for the 12 revolutionaries into revolutionary*

*energy, to take their revolutionary determination as example, to continue and raise the level of revolutionary organization and revolutionary fight without resignation!*

And with this consciousness do we call on the 12 revolutionaries we lost in the death fast, as it is said in a leaflet of the Marmara region of the Bolshevik Party:

***“Greetings to you, you children of the sun!***

***Greetings, thousand greetings to you, you heroes and models of resistance.***

***We bow our heads before your red bodies which you have crowned with your consciousness, and say:***

***You have taken your place in the golden pages of history and conquered our hearts.***

***The flag you have raised will never be lowered!”***

Fascism in our country is so barbarous that even for the simplest democratic rights one must put his life at stake. The deaf ears of the intellectuals and the few who call themselves democrats, can hear only the death cries. And the political agents of the ruling classes behave against the revolutionaries, whom they could not force to capitulation, according to the logic: Should we nourish them instead of executing them?



The prisons in our country are fight arenas in which fascism and revolution struggle the hardest. Fascist ruling classes undertake everything and try all methods to force the revolutionary prisoners, whom they can get hold of in the course of the class struggle, to capitulation, to turn them around, to make them to renegades and loyal subjects or to pacifists. Revolutionary prisoners are waging a ruthless fight against it to preserve their revolutionary identity and dignity.



of action, because we did not want to weaken the revolutionary front during an action which was begun and waged independent of us and in which stood the State forces and the revolutionaries face to face.

But now that the death fast is finished, it is possible and necessary to discuss the question of hunger strike and death fast as a form of action in order to draw lessons from it for the future.

## Hunger strike and death fast as forms of action

**T**he hunger strike (and death fast as its highest form) is a form of action used very frequently by revolutionaries in our country who fall into the hands of the ruling classes. This form of action is applied partly also by bourgeois organizations. The point of departure for a Communist, revolutionary approach to the question of hunger strikes is the fundamental approach of Marxism-Leninism to the question of forms of action.

Lenin formulates it so:

*“What are the fundamental demands which every Marxist should make of an examination of the question of forms of struggle? In the first place, Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by not binding the movement to any one particular form of struggle. It recognises the most varied forms of struggle; and it does not ‘concoct’ them, but only generalises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise of themselves in the course of the movement. Absolutely hostile to all abstract formulas and to all doctrinaire recipes, Marxism demands an attentive attitude to the mass struggle in progress, which, as the movement develops, as the class-consciousness of the masses grows, as economic and political*

*crises become acute, continually gives rise to new and more varied methods of defence and attack. Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle. Under no circumstances does Marxism confine itself to the forms of struggle possible and in existence at the given moment only, recognising as it does that new forms of struggle, unknown to the participants of the given period, inevitably arise as the given social situation changes. In this respect Marxism learns, if we may so express it, from mass practice, and makes no claim whatever to teach the masses forms of struggle invented by ‘systematisers’ in the seclusion of their studies. ...*

*In the second place, Marxism demands an absolutely historical examination of the question of the forms of struggle. To treat this question apart from the concrete historical situation betrays a failure to understand the rudiments of dialectical materialism. At different stages of economic evolution, depending on differences in political, national-cultural, living and other conditions, different forms of struggle come to the fore and become the principal forms of struggle; and in connection with this, the secondary, auxiliary forms of struggle undergo change in their turn. To attempt to answer yes or no to the question whether any particular means of struggle should be used, without making a detailed examination of the concrete situation of the given moment at the given stage of its development, means completely to abandon the Marxist position.”* (Lenin, “Guerrilla Warfare”, Works, Vol. 11, our emphasis)

I.e., Marxists do not refuse any form of struggle in principle and treat and rate the question of the applicability of a form of struggle in connection with the concrete (historical) situation.

In this connection there is in each concrete situation only one criterion for the correctness of the selected form of struggle: **Maximum**



The number of participants in the hunger-strike the revolutionary organizations began on May 20 with the above demands, increased day by day and rose to 2000 at the beginning of July. But outside there was support only from the family members of prisoners and revolutionary organizations.



Had they not seen that the solidarity actions grew constantly, had the pressure of their imperialist masters not been that there were too many deaths and they should stop these deaths, had 10 thousand prisoners not begun again with the hunger strike etc., they would have rubbed their hands and waited for the death of still more revolutionaries.

***The concrete murderers of the 12 revolutionaries are Aar, Kazan, Erbakan, iller, Karaday etc. They have committed these murders in the name of the dependent ruling classes, in the name of their State. The fascist State, the fascist order is the murderer.***

***The murderers will be called to account and no crime will remain unpunished!***

***The correctest way to call them to account is to raze this bloodthirsty fascist order to the ground with the revolution. The Aars, Kazans, Erbakans, illers etc. are replaceable. The functions they fulfill today can be fulfilled tomorrow by others. The problem is to destroy the fascist order, not to kill this or that fascist!***

***The fascist order will be destroyed with the revolution of workers, peasants and other***

***toilers, and so will the ruling classes be called to account! These developments show once more that, in order to live like a human being, there is no other way out than overthrowing this fascist order with the revolution. Fascist barbarism or revolution! Such are the true alternatives!***

The death fast, through which we lost 12 revolutionaries and many others were damaged, came to an end on July 28 after an agreement was reached between representatives of the prisoners and unofficial intermediaries of the State.

The hunger strike the PKK relaunched to support and extend the resistance is still going on.

We Bolsheviks have not discussed the question of whether this action is right or wrong during the hunger strike. We have limited ourselves in our agitation and propaganda to supporting the just demands of the action, calling to learn from its revolutionary resolve.

Our only criticism during the action was that the demands of the action had not been linked with the demand of revolution correctly. We have not raised the question of the form



*contribution towards increasing the level of consciousness and organisation of the masses of workers and toilers.*

The action and the form of action, which at best brings the working class and toilers closer to revolution in a given concrete situation and raises their level of consciousness and organization at most, is the correct action and the correct form of action.

For Marxists, hunger strike (and death fast as its supreme form) is a form of action which has emerged in a certain phase of the class struggle in the struggle of the masses. It may not be refused in principle. This form of struggle can also be used under certain historical conditions by Marxists.

But we must keep in mind certain fundamental particularities that separate this form of action from others. What are these particularities?

«-Hunger-strike (and death fast) is a passive form of action. Hunger-strike is a form of action in which the participants find themselves in passive instead of active resistance, in contrast to a strike, occupation, rally, demonstration or armed action etc.

The action consists in participants refusing food (and water in the extreme case). Participants try to make their demands public and enforce them, and expose the ruling classes in that they harm and kill themselves personally in the extreme case.

«-Hunger-strike is a form of action which appeals above all to the non-revolutionary humanistic, liberal, reformist public, and not to the revolutionary public. With its particularity, that the participants condemn themselves to hunger and inflict personal damage to make their voice heard, hunger-strike is a form of action which appeals to the humanistic feelings of sympathy.

Neither is this form of action more suitable than active forms of action to mobilize the really revolutionary masses. But with this

form of action it is possible to set certain parts of the public in movement which would not support the active forms of action, but can be mobilized through their sympathy. These are politically reformist and pacifist forces, and correspond in class terms to the liberal bourgeoisie.

To elucidate this point, we want to give an example: Reformist, pacifist groups and the liberal bourgeoisie are not in reality in a revolutionary position *vis-a-vis the State*. At best, they are in favor of safeguarding the State in a better way by moderating some of its excesses. It is unthinkable that they would support a prison riot which questions *State power* and refuses the State monopoly of power, and brings an armed dispute with State forces on the agenda. Even when such a prison riot is carried out for infallibly just minimum demands, the liberal bourgeoisie would not support such a riot since it is directed against the State.

But the same strata can support a hunger-strike or a death fast with identical demands, since such an action appeals to human sense of pity and sympathy.

«-For Communists and revolutionaries, hunger-strike is a form of action which in general is possible when the class struggle rather lags behind, the mass basis of the Communist movement, the revolutionary organizations and the organized forces are very weak, when no other forms of active action are possible; in one sense, it is a form of action which springs from weakness.

That this form of action *in general* corresponds to the conditions of a backward class struggle, does not mean that this form of action can absolutely not be applied in times of a developed class struggle at all. Besides, hunger-strike is a form of action which comes much more frequently to the agenda in prisons, where forms of action are much limited in comparison with outside.



«-In the case of death fast, the participants threaten the addressee of their demand with killing themselves thru hunger and thirst, i.e. with suicide. They deploy their bare life as their weapon!

Unquestionably suicide here is not comparable with suicide in which a person kills himself to escape the difficulties of life. Here we are speaking of employing one's body as a weapon in an act of suicide during the class struggle in a situation where there is no other weapon as one's body. That is not suicide in the real sense of the word.

Such an action requires a big revolutionary will, a big revolutionary determination, for which revolutionaries have respect. Nevertheless, for Communists and revolutionaries this suicide is also an expression of weakness. For Communists and revolutionaries, such actions

are the last means to resort to among forms of action. If a Communist or a revolutionary puts his life at stake in the death fast, then it means he is ready to sacrifice his life for the revolution.

For the ruling classes the death of a Communist or revolutionary is no threat, but something which they wish. Therefore the main task for Communists and revolutionaries consists in keeping a life which the ruling classes want to destroy alive a day longer in defiance of them and to wage the class struggle and to inflict maximum damage on them!

In this connection some people from the liberal bourgeoisie gave hunger-striking revolutionaries the advice not to commit suicide, that it would be a pity when they committed suicide, that life was something beautiful etc. This is an advice to prefer an undignified life





instead of a death in dignity. They are not in favor of living for the revolution, but living at all costs. For Communists, however, it is not a matter of living, but living for the revolution. And when necessary, they can sacrifice their lives as well.

To put an end to one's life consciously; to smash the deaf ears, to make them hear by putting an end to one's life, to shock the people in order to mobilize them for the fight for certain demands can be possible only when there is no other ways and means! There can be moments in which maximum damage is inflicted to the ruling classes by death in a death fast. And then the death fast imposes itself as the only correct form of action on a person, on an organization...

From these particularities which distinguish hunger-strike (and death fast) from other forms of action, we should draw the conclusion that hunger-strike and death fast is not refused as forms of action by Communists and revolutionaries in principle, but are the last alternatives among forms of action to choose when no other forms are possible and expedient.

Rather, hunger-strikes and death fasts are forms of struggle which revolutionaries and Communists in the hands of the ruling classes, extraordinarily limited in their forms and possibilities of action, may have to utilize under certain conditions. They are forms of action which, with regard to the class struggle, do not have as much weight for the struggle outside as inside (in prison).

\* \* \*

Now, taking this fundamental approach as our starting-point, we want to discuss and assess the death fast concretely.

## **The Latest Hunger-Strike, Development of the Death Fast and Its Assessment**

**T**he prisons in our country are fight arenas in which fascism and revolution struggle the hardest. Fascist ruling classes undertake everything and try all methods to force the revolutionary prisoners, whom they can get hold of in the course of the class struggle, to capitulation, to turn them around, to make them to renegades and loyal subjects or to pacifists. Revolutionary prisoners are waging a ruthless fight against it to preserve their revolutionary identity and dignity.

In this struggle revolutionary prisoners have won themselves a number of rights and beaten back a series of attacks. Several revolutionaries laid down their lives for these rights in various actions. One of the most important achievements is unquestionably the putting together of revolutionary prisoners in certain prisons.

This practice, which the bourgeoisie employed first of all partially from lack of possibilities, facilitated the revolutionaries to behave collectively. The bourgeoisie have been trying for years to change this situation and prevent revolutionary prisoners from living together. Each attempt is answered with new struggles.

Besides, revolutionary prisoners have very concrete human, democratic demands. Strictly speaking, these demands are simple, but important for a life in prison fit or human beings. For these concrete demands a fight must be waged every day anew.

At the moment, the situation with regard to the class struggle outside is not so splendid at all, contrary to the assessments of a series of revolutionary organizations that a growing revolutionary situation would exist.

Objectively the class struggle is running at a rather low level. Current actions of the working class do not exceed the system boundaries and are mainly limited to demands for economic





reform. Their few political demands are also system-inherent and are used by sections of the ruling classes as a means for power struggle against other sections. One can hardly speak of a peasant struggle with its own demands. The students movement and that of the intellectuals is a movement of a small minority. Even by the most concrete occasions mass participation is very slight. Struggles apart from the activities of the leading revolutionary, organized forces are an exception. The women's movement carries also the character of a small minority, a marginal movement.

The most developed and massive social movement is the Kurdish national movement under the leadership of PKK, and in the momentary situation it also has landed on a reformist path.

The movement outside is not in a position to force the State to let the revolutionary prisoners free. What's more, there is not even a mass movement, support from outside, so that the revolutionary prisoners get their simplest human rights. Support is limited to that of the relatives of prisoners, organized revolutionary forces and a few human rights unions.

Precisely in such a situation the ruling classes with their Anayol\* government have prepared and also started an attack on revolutionary prisoners.

\* \* \*

**T**he first reaction to the preparation of attacks and against the attacks themselves came from PKK prisoners. On 27 March 1996 in Diyarbakir prison the PKK prisoners began an unlimited hunger-strike in rotation. On 25 April 18 prisoners turned this hunger-strike into an unlimited non-rotating hunger-strike.

At the beginning of May, on 6, 8 and 10 May the Minister of Justice of the Anayol-government, torturer-in-chief Mehmet Açar, issued three decrees on prisons. These decrees

were a declaration of war against the rights of revolutionary prisoners who had fought for them in prison. Besides it was explained that revolutionary prisoners will be transported to single cells in the high-security prison in Eskiflehir. This was the most extensive attack of the recent times.

Thereupon the hunger-strike the PKK prisoners began in Diyarbakir was expanded to all prisons where PKK members are imprisoned. Thereafter on 20 May by decision of the Central Prison Coordination Body incorporating several revolutionary organizations, an indefinite hunger-strike in rotation was started. This action was turned into a death fast on its 45th day.

With regard to their demands and planning as well as their implementation, the PKK action and the hunger-strike of revolutionary organizations were different actions.

First we want to present the demands of the PKK prisoners on hunger-strike.

Although there were concrete demands for improving the situation in prisons among the hunger-strike demands of the PKK, these were not the main political demands. The PKK prisoners carried out their hunger-strike with the following political demands:

*“Recognition of PKK prisoners as prisoners of war.*

*Reply to the unilateral truce call of the PKK.*

*Stop the military operations, stop burning down and destroying villages, stop the murders with unknown perpetrators, stop letting people disappear in police custody, stop the expulsions etc.*

*Observance of the Geneva convention by the Turkish Republic, dispatchment of international observer delegations so that these can review the consequences and infringement of rules on the spot.”*

*(“Evrensel”, 25 July 1996)*

The urgent goal was the demand for recognition of the PKK as a war party by the ruling



classes and imperialists, its recognition as a counterpart with whom to negotiate a solution. As is known, the line of the PKK has landed on a reformist path, according to which a political solution should be achieved through negotiations between the ruling classes and the PKK.

Accordingly recognition as a counterpart stands at the center of the PKK politics. This demand constitutes the main goal of all actions. The armed struggle too has become a means towards this end. And the hunger-strike of PKK prisoners was the implementation of this line in prisons, an action to lend force to the demand for recognition.

It is clear that the demands of the PKK will not be acknowledged by the ruling classes officially at the current point in time. Therefore, who were then the main addressees of this action?

The main addressees of this action were the liberal bourgeoisie, which should set the hawks under pressure, the intellectuals, imperialist powers and institutions, which maintain to be the defenders of democracy, and the forces called upon to send delegations for control purposes.

This action is not directed at mobilizing the revolutionary forces still more. Its demands are reform demands that are formulated in such a way that forces other than revolutionary can also accept them. In agitation and propaganda no mention is made of the fact that, even when these demands are attained (apart from the fact that dispatchment of delegations is the only demand with a real chance) essentially nothing will change and the solution lies in the revolution.

This is an action on reformist lines. No matter how militant, how self-sacrificing the participants in the action are, this does not change the reformist nature of the action. The reform demands of the action are legitimate. We uphold the correctness of these demands, explain that we support them and on the basis

of these demands provide -together with our criticism- limited support. We demand the action to be brought on a revolutionary line and fight for it; we side with the hunger-strikers against the attacks of the ruling classes.

On the 50th day of the hunger-strike, the Human Rights Union, various other institutions and prisoners' relatives approached the prisoners with the demand to "*try to enforce their rights by means which do not lead to death*" with the aim of preventing eventual deaths. ("*Özgür Politika*", 22 May 1996).

Thereupon the prisoners transformed their non-rotating indefinite hunger-strike again in indefinite hunger-strike in rotation. Meanwhile the senior public prosecutor in Diyarbakir spoke with representatives of the prisoners and explained that some concrete demands were accepted. The PKK hunger-strike was gradually finished.

The PKK finished its hunger-strike without having been able to enforce even one of its main demands.

It is evident from this that the main goal of the action was the dissemination and propagation of a political position. Finally, the PKK hunger-strike was not an action that raised the level of consciousness and organization of the workers and toilers and brought them a step closer to the revolution.

The PKK explained after the first death cases in the death fast of revolutionary organizations that it has relaunched a hunger-strike out of solidarity with them to expand and extend the resistance. So almost 10 thousand PKK prisoners have again begun a hunger-strike. This is extremely positive. This renewed PKK action unquestionably played an important role in the ruling classes negotiating with the prisoners on death fast.

\* \* \*

Thile the PKK finished its hunger-strike in the last week of May, the *Central Prison*



**Coordination Body** organized by members of DHKP-C, Direnifl Hareketi, Ekim, MLKP, THKP-C HDÖ, TIKB, TKEP-Leninist Wing and TKP (ML) in prison decided to begin with a hunger-strike on May 20 in all prisons in which members of these organizations serve their sentences.

The initial demands of this hunger-strike were the following:

*“1. Repeal the coffin-house decrees (the decrees of 6th, 8th and 10th May).*

*Stop forcing the prisoners to become renegades, stop the banishments.*

*Close down all coffin houses (special prisons with solitary confinement cells- Translator’s Note), above all, the one in Eskiflehir.*

*2. Stop the attacks on the relatives of prisoners.*

*3. Repeal the impairments on our rights to defense and medical treatment.*

*4. Stop letting people disappear, stop the executions, the massacres and the torture.*

*Stop the State terror directed against the toilers, above all against the Kurdish people.*

*Stop the cruelties in Erzurum and Diyarbakir prisons.” (Partizan Sesi, # 42, p. 4)*

The first three demands are concrete demands for reform which affect directly the prisoners and their family members.

To win the demands enumerated in the first part of point 4 can only be possible under the conditions of the overthrow of this State. Especially the State terror against the Kurdish people and the toilers will go on as long as this State exists. Letting people disappear, torture and executions are inseparable companions of this fascist State.

It is fully wrong to list the qualitatively different demands – without regard to whether they can be achieved within this system or not – side by side, to make no explanations whatsoever in this respect and to explain that one will go on with the hunger-strike until all these demands are fulfilled.

During such actions, reform demands which we want to achieve should be set up concretely. In addition, propaganda demands should be proclaimed in statements. In all cases, in a statement on the action, it should be made absolutely clear that even when all reform demands are achieved, democracy in our country can be won only with the revolution.

Only such a statement will not carry a wrong consciousness into the masses, will give them a correct consciousness, will help them to increase their level of consciousness and organization. Otherwise, inspite of the radicality of language and demands, inspite of the self-sacrifice of the fighters, one can not step over the boundaries of dominant reformism.

The action begun by revolutionary organizations on May 20, did not rest on a really revolutionary basis with regard to its political line, either. Nevertheless, the demands of the action were just and deserved to be supported and defended. While defending the correctness of the demands, the inconsistency in the political line of the action had to be criticized.

At this point one should discuss the question whether the indefinite non-rotating hunger-strike was the most suitable form of action for the defense of these demands and whether there were other possible forms of action.

Our answer to the first question is negative, while we answer the second question in the affirmative. Yes, the revolutionary organizations could have decided to carry out other, active forms of action.

With these actions too they could have likewise lent their voices weight, gotten the support of the revolutionaries outside and given the revolutionary movement outside a spur.

For example, resolving to put up active resistance against transfers to special prisons with solitary confinement cells, and carrying



it out in practice. Riot in case of a prisoner transport.

No doubt, this wouldn't be a decision which the liberal bourgeoisie, and the intellectuals who intervened later, would support like the hunger-strike. But if the starting point were the mobilization of the revolutionary movement of workers and toilers, the decision would not have fallen for hunger-strike, but for militant, active forms of resistance.

The number of participants in the hunger-strike the revolutionary organizations began on May 20 with the above demands, increased day by day and rose to 2000 at the beginning of July. But outside there was support only from the family members of prisoners and revolutionary organizations.

Mass media concealed the hunger-strike, and there was no resonance from the intellectuals and democratic -imperialist- institutions of the West on which certain hopes were based. Under these conditions the hunger-strike was transformed into a death fast by volunteers. On 3 June it was made public that the hunger-strike was turned into a death fast. This has brought some movement, but up to the first death cases there were no essential changes.

In the mean time the ruling classes tried to demonstrate their determination through their government spokesmen, and to split the action, in that they explained they weren't ready to any compromises. The prisoners have shown through their practical stand that this was a useless attempt. On 22 July followed the first deaths.

With the first deaths the movement extended outside also to groups which the revolutionary movement does not reach and mobilize directly. Mass media could not pass over the actions in silence any more. Pressure was brought to bear on by the intellectuals and liberals to stop these deaths.

Meanwhile imperialist circles in Europe and the USA intervened with the wish -this should rather be understood as an order- to

see to it that the necessary steps are taken to prevent these deaths. At the same time, ten thousand PKK prisoners went on hunger-strike again out of solidarity with the hunger-strikers to extend the resistance front.

In the end the government which beforehand boasted it would never negotiate with the prisoners, was forced to give in out of fear that still more deaths would harm the State and can form a starting point for a rise of the movement outside. It was forced to explain that some demands of the prisoners are accepted, at least on paper.

On 28 July, after the 12th death, the death fast was finished with an agreement between the representatives of prisoners and government intermediaries.

The protocol published in the daily "Hürriyet" on 29 July finishing the death fast is as follows:

*"The prison in Eskiflehir shall be closed to political prisoners.*

*There shall no more be any pressure or violence on the way to hospitals or courts.*

*New prison rules will be prepared, valid for all prisons, which guarantee humane prison conditions.*

*No more arrests, pressure or torture on family members.*

*The democratic rights won will remain in force.*

*The ministry shall take measures against arbitrary acts of the forces responsible for the external security of prisons.*

*Visit of prisoner representatives by prisoners shall not be hindered.*

*Social and cultural ties among prisoners shall in no way be hindered.*

*Unlimited access to letters and magazines.*

*The commission shall constantly observe the prisons in which the rights won and the legal rights are not observed.*

*The points over the transfer of prisoners to prisons with single cells in the decree of 9 July,*



which form a summary of the May decrees of the Aar period, should be cancelled. New prisoners shall be put in mraniye prison.”

**First of all, it is a success of the action that the ruling classes had to sit and negotiate with representatives of the prisoners over some of their demands on the negotiating table, and accept an important part of their reform demands at least on paper.**

**The revolutionaries have won this success with a struggle in which they put their lives at stake, with revolutionary will and determination. We must note this first.**

But at this point we must also discuss what kind of success this is, whether it was worth the sacrifices made, and whether -when we are ready to pay such a high price- other forms of action were not possible and more appropriate.

All organizations participating in the hunger-strike bring only the success side of the action to the fore and with their assessment that “we have won a victory” carefully avoid the question whether the price paid was worth it.

By comparing the demands of the death fast and those granted in the protocol, two differing points can be ascertained.

The first point concerns the demand to close down solitary confinement prisons. There is no mention of closing these down in the protocol. Only the Eskiflehir prison will be closed, and only to political prisoners. One can speak of a compromise here. Without a doubt, this means an improvement on the decrees, but it is a fact that this demand could not be pushed thru.

The second point concerns the fourth point of the demands. Here is this demand again to refresh our memory. It was said in the fourth point of the list of demands:

“Stop letting people disappear, stop the executions, the massacres and the torture.

Stop the State terror directed against the toilers, above all against the Kurdish people.

Stop the cruelties in Erzurum and Diyarbakir prisons.”

There is not even a trace of this point in the protocol. What happened? The demands in the fourth point are not to be defended any more? Or were these demands not put forward seriously? Or were these demands fulfilled as a result of the hunger-strike and the hunger-strike thus finished? Or was it wrong to put these demands forward on an equal footing as demands of the death fast side by side with the reform demands?

We have explained above that the latter is the case.

Interessant ist, dass die, die den Erfolg bertreiben und schreiben, dass die freien Gefangenen, die Religionverkaufende, mafiose, mrderische Refah yol-Regierung in die Knie gezwungen und alle Forderungen akzeptieren lassen haben.

It is interesting that those who blow up the success and write that “*the free prisoners have forced the religious merchant, mafioso, murderous Refahyol government to its knees and have had all demands accepted. We have conquered the death, the people won*” (“Kurtuluf”, #55, title page), have fully forgotten the fourth point. That is a frivolous attitude.

The success won is, in the last analysis, a success in the form of the acceptance on paper of very simple reform demands by the ruling classes thru some intermediaries, and not even thru their official representatives.

The ruling classes have signed the protocol to stop the movement now, and not in order to carry out the points in it. And there is very little that has changed after the death fast.

It is wrong to overdo this success. We think that, if the criterion of success is the fulfillment of demands, the price paid for this success is too high, that the damage done by the death of 12 revolutionaries in hunger-strike is far bigger than the benefit it brought.



If the success is measured by the impetus the hunger-strike gave the movement outside, there is a disproportion between this impetus and the price paid.

In any case, in a situation in which 2.000 persons are on hunger-strike, and 270 of them are ready to die for their demands, we hold it for wrong to choose death fast as a form of action for fulfillment of the above demands and for giving the movement outside a spur.

With 270 persons ready to die, it would have been possible to carry out still more militant, still more radical actions. It would have been possible to lend more weight to the demands. It would have been possible to force the government to negotiations still earlier.

There could have been again 12 or perhaps still more death cases. But these deaths would not come in the form of laying oneself to death, but in an eye-for-an-eye, tooth-for-a-tooth struggle against the henchmen of ruling classes, each of our losses inflicting losses on the enemy as well.

Such a stand would no doubt have frightened the liberal bourgeoisie, the reformists and the pacifists, and prevented them from supporting the action. Naturally, imperialist institutions like the European Parliament would not have given their support to such an action. But such an action would have contributed much more to the education of the working class and toiling masses in North Kurdistan-Turkey in the spirit of revolution.

Nobody should say this were not possible. The riots in Buca and Bayrampafla prisons a short time ago have shown that other forms of action beside hunger-strikes are also possible in prisons.

Only, the revolutionary organizations must assess revolutionary will, self-sacrifice, perseverance and contempt of death correctly.

## The Ideological Background of the Hunger-Strike: Martyrdom!

There is one thing that is peculiar in the agitation and propaganda for the hunger-strike. The death fast is presented as the most radical, the most militant action among all action forms. Participation in the death fast is considered to be a great luck.

In the special number of "Kurtuluf" it is said: "We are the lucky ones among hundreds of volunteers.

This honorable task was given us." The main slogan of "Kurtuluf" is "*We will conquer the death by victory, we will win victory with the death fast.*"

Among all forms of action, although the death stands at the end, the most passive one, the death fast, is clearly being glorified here. Death during a death fast is qualified as conquering the death and as the uppermost level to be reached by a revolutionary. Instead of presenting death as something normal that should be taken into account in revolutionary struggle, it is put forward as the supreme goal to be reached by a revolutionary.

We revolutionaries are not fighting to fall in the revolutionary struggle. We are fighting to change the world. But it may happen that we fall in this struggle. That is possible! We have no fear of it. But that is not something to glorify, either! Unquestionably death in struggle for the cause of Communism, for the cause of revolution is the most meaningful, most solemn death. But, as we said, death is for us no goal, nor can it be. Our goal is a life full of struggle for the cause of revolution every day!

It is not desirable for us to die while we are fulfilling a task or during combat, but we must reckon with it all the time. In defiance of the enemy, we want to live a day longer. We choose the conscious death only then when the



cause of revolution derives maximum benefit from it at any given moment. Here also our goal is not death but maximum contribution to the revolutionary cause.

Each fallen revolutionary is a big loss for the revolutionary ranks. But revolution does not advance without suffering losses. We have no time to sing praises to the fallen and to mourn them. We have to use our time to develop the class struggle. We transform the sorrow we feel for the fallen into anger and energy in the class struggle.

The stand of these organizations to death means partially an exaltation of death, since they put forward death for a revolutionary as a supreme goal and place the fallen revolutionaries, just because they are fallen, over living revolutionaries. Those who present it as something completely extraordinary to look death squarely in the eye, unconsciously stoke the death fear.

On the other hand, revolutionary cadres are educated not in the spirit of protracted struggle but of joining the caravan of the fallen as soon as possible, since death is put forward as their supreme goal.

That is not educating them to life and struggle, but to death.

All this bears a great similarity with religious ideologies. The symbols occasionally used (the headbands etc.) also bear similarities.

One of the most fundamental characteristics of a Communist consists unquestionably in being able to look death squarely in the eye in the struggle for a new life all the time. But it is not death that he wishes for himself, that he longs for.

In this connection one thing should be clear: There is a lot to learn from a 20 year old revolutionary who puts his life at stake in a death fast. But a fighter who lives 80 years and fights his life long for the revolution, contributes a lot more to it than the 20 year-

old fallen revolutionary. He has it a lot more difficult than the former.

Concretely speaking, we think that the revolutionaries whom we lost in this death fast and who were ready to die, would have contributed more to the revolution with other actions than their deaths in the death fast, and the energy was misused.

## Conclusions

**T**he death fast showed to all who wanted to see once again what lacks in our country at most: Class struggle is underdeveloped and unity of the class movement with Communist organization is very weak. In this situation the struggle runs as struggle of petit-bourgeois organizations which, strictly speaking, are detached from the class movement. They replace people's action with the actions of organizations, they try to create a people's movement with the actions of organizations. And subsequently the organizations praise their actions to the skies. Wrong and harmful ideas are spread in the name of being a revolutionary, in the name of Marxism-Leninism.

We must tackle the task we set ourselves, the construction of the party within the working class, still more firmly. Without creating the BOLSHEVIK PARTY united firmly with the working class movement, the present situation will not change.

10 August 1996

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\* *Anayol is an abbreviation for the coalition government between ANAP (Motherland Party of Mesut Yılmaz) and DYP (Party of the Right Path of Çiller).*