

TURKEY

Referendum : 51.3 % say “yes”. A Pyrrhic victory for Erdogan *

By our correspondents from the Workers Fraternity Party (IKP)

Who are we ?

● The International Workers Committee Against War, Exploitation, for a Workers' International (IWC) was set up at the World Conference held in Mumbai (India) on Novembre 19, 20 and 21 gathering delegates from 28 countries.

● The IWC was set up on the basis of the Mumbai Manifesto against war, exploitation and precarious labour which was endorsed by labour activist and trade union and political organisations officers from 46 countries (*)

● Its continuations committee is composed of labour activists from all political/ trade union backgrounds:

Innocent Assogba (Benin),
Alan Benjamin (USA),
Colia Clark (USA),
Constantin Cretan (Romania),
Berthony Dupont (Haiti),
Ney Ferreira (Brazil),
Daniel Gluckstein (France),
Rubina Jamil (Pakistan),
Apo Leung (China),
Gloria Gracida (Mexico),
M.A. Patil (India),
Mandlenkosi Phangwa (Azania),
Klaus Schüller (Germany),
Jung Sikhwa (Korea),
John Sweeney (Great Britain),
Mark Vassilev (Russia),
Nambiath Vasudevan (India).

(*) Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Azania, Belarus, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Korea, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

Of course, for all those who – like us, the activists of the Workers Fraternity Party (the IKP) - have been campaigning for months now for voting no to the 16 April referendum, this is a disappointment.

But with the 51.3% that as been announced, it is a Pyrrhic victory for Erdogan. To be clear: if this campaign had taken place in democratic conditions, the “no” would have won. Because for Erdogan, this referendum - aimed at putting an ultra-authoritarian regime in place - was to be a vote-in.

Erdogan violated the principles of the current Constitution, which specify that the head of State must remain “neutral” in the case of a referendum. He invested full-heartedly in the campaign for “yes”. He was betting heavily because, given the crimes that he has committed along with the Islamic State and against the Kurdish people, he knew that losing his presidential immunity could lead him to being judged in court.

It must be emphasized that the “no” vote won in the three major cities of Turkey: in Istanbul (52%), in Ankara (52%) and in Izmir (70%). If this result had been predictable in Izmir, no one had expected a loss in Ankara or in Istanbul, where Erdogan and his party had never been beaten since 1994!

It was also a defeat for the leadership of the far right party – which was allied with Erdogan and had called for voting “yes”, although two-thirds of whose electorate voted “no”.

In the Kurdish towns, the “no” vote won, although less forcefully than in the last elections. This is obviously the result of the intimidation that the government has exerted on the Kurdish people.

And now?

In a speech that he made after the announcing of the results, Erdogan challenged - for the first time - not only the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, but also the democratic gains that were wrested in the final years of the Ottoman State (and which led to the democratic bourgeois revolution of 1908). And he says that he is “opposed to constitutional monarchy”!

The question of the defence of democracy has become a central question today. It is the working class that needs to take charge of this defence, because the working class itself will be the first to be targeted by the regime in its attempt to attack political and trade union organizations.

* A Pyrrhic victory is a victory that inflicts such a devastating toll on the victor that it is tantamount to defeat (named after king Pyrrhus whose army suffered irreplaceable casualties in defeating the Romans in the 3rd century BC).

POLAND

Teachers' massive strike against the destruction of lower secondary education

Last March 31 Poland experienced one of the most massive teachers strike since 1989. Answering their union's call, teachers stopped work by the tens of thousands. Joined by the parents, they demand the withdrawal of the reform that, among others, aims at destroying lower secondary education.

Last March 31, across Poland, primary and secondary school teachers struck against the reform of the education system that the

government is to apply as of next school year. This reform simply destroys lower secondary education, which means the destruction of tens of thousands teachers' jobs. The 250,000-strong ZNP (Polish Teachers Union) called the strike. For legal reasons, the strikers' demands were to be strictly “social and professional”: a written guarantee that no job would be lost between now and 2022, wages and gains to be

maintained and a 10% wage raise. But what everyone knows is that behind the teachers' mobilisation, the solidarity of parents and youth and the determination to win the demands, the whole society that is simmering.

This has been the second time only since 1989 that a national teachers' union has called a national day of strike. Despite pressures and attempts at intimidation against the staff by some regional education authorities, half the total of schools from kindergartens up to final years went on strike. During the whole day, most schools – striking or not – sported Polish flags, union flags and banners with demands written on them, or

even black flags in sign of solidarity.

Numerous parents, numerous associations and organisations supported the strike against the reform with the common slogan: *“No to chaos in schools!”* On this March 31, during the press conference, the national office bearer of the union declared, *“We thank all those who today are on strike and all those who are supporting us. The Teachers and the support and administrative staff have shown great civic courage and their professional solidarity”*.

On the same day, the ministry let out that no job was threatened and that the school map was to be published by the end of May, and that

wage increases were planned, for up to 10%.... for 2018.

At the initiative of ZNP union, a committee made up of fifteen representatives of parent associations, unions and political organisations circulated a petition demanding *“the holding of a national citizen initiative referendum”* with a single question: *“For or against the reform of the education system”*. By the end of March, the needed 500,000 signatures were already nearly all gathered. Teachers, together with the support of the Polish people, are determined to fight till they secure the withdrawal of the reform.

Correspondent

RUSSIA

After the St Petersburg attack

A contribution by Workers Platform (Russia)

A bomb exploded in the Metro in St Petersburg killing ten people and injuring over 50 (...)

Workers Platform expresses its support and joins the bereaved families in their grief. We are also convinced that an analysis of these events is necessary.

There is particularly one question that has to be answered: if, as Putin has stated, one of the goals of the Russian military intervention in Syria, was *“to prevent any risk of terrorist attacks on the territory of the Russian Federation”*, why then has it caused, to the contrary, a rise in the number of attack victims in Russia?

First, perhaps, because that was not the main objective of the operation. Yet we may soon be hearing a political counsellor of the Kremlin explaining that if the military operation in Syria has not been “fully” able to stop terrorist attacks in Russia, it has nevertheless made it possible to reach its other major objective: *“To stabilise the legitimate power and create the conditions for a political compromise”* (again quoting Vladimir Putin's words).

So all that will be left for the State propaganda to do will just be to convince us that all this is in accordance with the *“vital interests of Russia”*, that Russia is hemmed in by enemies and that it must fight to survive in the world arena. And that, without our intervention in Syria, we would be facing even more terrorist attacks.

What is this all about, really? Reflect a bit on this: who is to profit from this intervention? Who will profit from the oil contracts that will be signed, in the case that situation in Syria were not indeed to be stabilized stabilised? And who, thanks to all that money, will be able to buy new yachts, and new villas and vineyards in Tuscany? (1)

Who will profit when our bourgeoisie, secure on the heaps of money gleaned from gas and oil, merged in with the bureaucracy, seeks to realise its dream of finally gaining full membership in the club of imperialist powers?

Who? Certainly not the Russian worker! And to be convinced of this, we need only look at the situation: The crisis is on our doorstep? Mr

Putin has fallen out with Mr Obama? No worries. The workers, the civil servants, the peasants and students will foot the bill! Real wages plummeted by 6.1% in 2016. In the same year, the number of Russian billionaires, as reckoned by Bloomberg, soared by 21.9%. New laws to extort money from the people, such as the “Plato” system (2), are being multiplied.

If we want to stop grieving innocent victims over and over again, let us first begin by affirming that there are no shared “national interests” in common between the bourgeoisie and the workers.

This first step on the way towards the modification of political and social relationships in the country will break the ground for the international solidarity of workers in their struggle against plundering leaders and greedy business people hungry for oil and bent on exploiting the entire planet.

(1) This refers to the latest corruption scandal concerning Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev.

(2) A tax on the number of kilometres driven, which badly hits lorry drivers; they are once again mobilising, by the thousands, against it.