

# Declaration on the Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question

The Defence Arguments that the Head of the PKK Abdullah  
Ocalan Presented at “The Trail of the Century”

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## Introduction

My defence is not so much based on detailed replies to the charges in the indictment prepared by the Chief Prosecutor [of the State Security Courts], but rather, is it about what I see as a more important topic: how to reach a historic reconciliation from a revolt under the leadership of the PKK and increase the possibility of a solution to the Kurdish issue. I have created an opportunity for peace to these [armed] activities that could very well be called a law-intensity war.

Actually, I voiced these views for the first time as a response to President Turgut Ozal's call [for a ceasefire?]. At the historic press conference on 15 March, 1993 [where I declared the ceasefire], this is exactly what I said: "We are not demanding an immediate separation from Turkey. We are realists on this subject. Do not interpret this [ceasefire] as a simple tactic [serving a hidden agenda]. There are many reasons as to why [we are realists]. Those who understand the historic, political and economic situation of the two peoples [the Kurds and Turks], know well that separation could not take place. They [the Kurds and Turks] are intertwined like flesh and bone. I have emphasised this in many interviews. We want the relations to be rearranged. Knotted relations and contradictions of a thousand years await untangling. Our fundamental understanding rests on a free and equal rearrangement of [Kurdish-Turkish relations]. To dub us "separatists" at every opportunity, is in fact the attitude that aims to fan separatism. The current arrangement of relations is hugely draining the life and the wealth of both the Turkish and the Kurdish people."

Here is what I clearly said on the occasion of our latest unilateral ceasefire on 1 September 1998 before I was handed to Turkey at the end of a plot carried out by an international force: "The war, if not originating from a very important contradiction, is a madness. Especially, meaningless terror and violence should never be part of human affairs. If this huge oppression of us is let up a bit and stopped; if human rights and democracy are promoted to improve our relations; and if problems are solved through dialogue, I don't think you will find any other people and organisation that are as thirsting for peaceful methods as us." I continued with these words, "right now the most fundamental problem of Turkey is to take democracy out of its state of demagoguery and trust it to the care of the people. This should not be taken as bashing the Republic. Especially, divisive and separatist, it never is. If anything, it is a wish for democratizing the Republic. This indeed is in the interest of Turkey. This is, if anything, to resuscitate Turkey from its currently choked off state. Those who speak and act in the name of the Republic must do something about this counter-democracy. This is basically what I said about violence."

"We are the side that has suffered the most from this violence. Who could blame us if, in this state of horrific imbalance of forces, in order to avoid extermination, we were forced to defend ourselves, our most legitimate rights, our identity and culture? The UN Constitution and even the Constitution of the Turkish Republic recognizes [the legitimacy of] the defense of these rights." I am quoting these because, some people

might falsely interpret that I have adopted these views due to the harsh conditions of my solitary confinement. I have the impression that even in the indictment, my statements advocating the same views — taken under interrogation — were by-passed.

However, [my statements] also express the need to transform the structure of the PKK, its narrow and strict ideological approach — a remnant of the fiery 1970s -, and its political structure in the light of the developments in the world and in Turkey in the 1990s. I have emphasised the need for reviewing, revising and updating its principles and programme in the aftermath of a huge experience. Throughout these years, I have increasingly searched to broaden [the PKK's worldview]. The same is true about my views on violence. [Excessive] violence even in defence of basic human rights, identity and cultural survival is rejected. It is well known that I have struggled within the organisation against practices of violence that went beyond the basic minimum. The indictment does not touch on these points. Also, it is not objective to heap under the rubric of “terror” all the negativity on one side [of the warring parties]. I do not feel compelled to criticise these aspects much. I do not find it necessary to defend myself on these points. Perhaps, my lawyers could open these matters more in their defence that concentrates more on the legal aspects.

The most important thing for me — irrespective of its name, origins and rationale — is to lay bare the necessity of peace for this extensive armed movement which is even officially dubbed a “low intensity war”. To find a reasonable solution, remembering the rule that “each war has a peace”, became the main focus of my defence. It is of great importance [for me] to evaluate the past, to update the programme and the political line [of the Kurdish movement] in the light of the current, concrete facts in order to facilitate a solution. This is also one of many things expected from me. It was the most practical thing to transform [the PKK platform] into a platform for peace since this is what I was striving to do just before my abduction. In general, the PKK's [ideological] defences have followed the two opposing extremes: Either a stubborn defence of the classical line, or the abandonment of that line. This, in a sense, is the same as having no solution. In my defence, I made it a point to go beyond this.

In my defence, I did not revert to either a classical Kurdish nationalist line or a leftist interpretation of a similar tendency. Developments went beyond [both tendencies]. I did not find it very necessary to go into lengthy discussions of the historical, social, and identity issues. It was more appropriate to leave them to social scientists as topics for research. Otherwise, my leaving them aside does not emanate from any serious political concerns. Also, we had several similar expositions and evaluations in the past. For the same reason I did not go into a political criticism of Turkey either. To reiterate often-debated points did not appeal to me as creative. The same point is valid for the PKK's programme, its structure and actions. Rather than discussing these topics which I have done elsewhere extensively, I found it important to emphasise as to what kind of transformation is needed to satisfy the need for a solution at this time. Political parties are a means to an end. If they do not transform themselves as time requires,

they will become an obstruction, outdated and inevitably defeated. An unproductive repetition, no matter how heroic, cannot contribute much to the ideal of freedom.

In my defence statement, I am not concerned with a legalistic defence for myself. It is so obvious to me that even the most basic rules of the existing constitution [in Turkey] are violated in my case. In addition, at a time when [the state] is insistent on denying the [Kurdish] identity, what is essential is to emphasise the ethical and political need for resistance. This, perhaps, will not change the outcome of the trial. However, it will leave for future [generations] a very precious legacy of solving the problem. I especially made sure that I paid attention to this [poignant issue].

I have put the issues into writing in the form of theses without being overly concerned with more details. Under these circumstances, I did not deem it necessary. Besides, I have not had much opportunity [to have access to defence materials] anyway.

The main thread that runs through my defence, even if repetitious at times, is the concept of a “democratic solution”. This time I went into details of this approach which I had touched on in a limited way previously. Leslie Lipson’s book *The Democratic Civilisation* which accidentally reached my hands, contributed to [my understanding of this [detailed approach]]. “The right of nations for self-determination” which was fashionable in the 1970s, and which in practical terms meant establishing a separate state, was, in fact, a blind alley in this specific [context]. In the case of Kurdistan, it was obstructing the solution rather than solving the problem. In my practice, I have tried to surpass these [limitations]. When I saw in practice, how backward and sometimes obstructive even the alternatives such as establishing a separate state, federalism, autonomy and similar approaches were in comparison to the rich mode of solutions democracy offered. It became very important for me to concentrate on the democratic system. The gradual occlusion of the military approaches, that is the armed struggle also has a share in this change of [directions] in our movement. Especially, given the traditional [Kurdish] uprisings where the rebellion — suppression cycle predominates, an approach that did not contain force and violence was urgently needed, not only in the Kurdish movement but also globally.

The uniqueness of Turkish — Kurdish relations, the inviolability of the national pact borders, and the current political and military situation necessitated a solution within a democratic system not only as historically correct, but nearly the only alternative. The urgent need for a comprehensive peace yearned for by everyone constituted the basis of our offer. Due to these reasons, the charming richness of the “democratic mode of finding a solution” is superior to the obstructing military and even to the [old] political style. [This offer] soothes the fundamental problem of Turkey and this historic stage of its general democratisation like a [well-prescribed] medicine. And moreover, the key approach of the state — which unobtrusively and gradually shaped policies and programmes and even reflected to us — was also along the same lines. As such, I did not shy away from opening it out with hope and doing all I can to make it a success. However, at this stage, it would be extremely optimistic — and even dangerous — to

say that “the two sides are reaching an agreement”. However, I strongly believe and I am of the impression that, sooner or later, this is the most suitable way of solving the problem among all else.

The last part of my defence is related to my personal situation. Perhaps there was not much of a need for it. However, I found it necessary for it completes the overall picture. To investigate in depth the search for a great freedom that also relates to my case, has become the methodology for me. I had to apply it to myself. A reply of this kind to the indictment would be very instructive. Here is what I observed: What characterises [marks] my life is the motto of “Give me my freedom or give me death.” Any other stance is unthinkable. However, to open its essence, to show its intricacies was very instructive. At this point, my greatest fear is the non-completion of this humanitarian project. Therefore, my greatest expectation from life is [to have a chance] to reach from an overly-competent character of a rebel for freedom to that of a struggler for peace which contains freedom. To analyse the character of a man of peace and that of a society of peace do require more than what is assumed, not only in terms of a political and social analysis, but also, a theoretical endeavour that requires a detailed psychological analysis. As I have emphasised, a war (or all kinds of violent actions) which do not aim at a noble, sacred and very necessary peace, is madness. In accordance with this rule [understanding], it was important that I should analyse in depth, not only the theoretical but also the moral, political and practical aspects of the character (in the Turkish text the literal word is personality) of the man of peace.

With such features, my defence lays bare in a remarkable and creative way the necessity of both, how the profound democratic stirrings Turkey is currently going through should become a fundamental attribute of the Republic and how the Kurdish question with its democratic spirit of unity, soul and will should unify at this historic stage with the Republic. My defense also emphasizes the need for change in our organization and in our people to incorporate the above transformations. Instead of the now classical kill — get killed cycle, [my defence advocates] that it is much better to live and let live as our modern times require. [My defence] concludes with the hope of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century that ushers in a new period of history which is possible only within the framework of a democratic republic, in democratic unity and its unparalleled power of solving problems, instead of the nearly two hundred-year -old tradition of the rebellion and the consequential suppression-and-denial policies of Turkey.

## **At the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Victorious Democracy**

Even though the roots of the democratic system go way back to the early history of humanity, it acquired a comprehensive meaning when it was incorporated into a state system in ancient Athens. Basically, democracy is the most realistic system that insures

the most freedom for the individual while allowing society to exercise self-rule. It derives its real power from corresponding to the natural in society. Perhaps, authoritarian regimes bring about rapid development, but no matter how strong, sooner or later, they collapse because they alienate themselves from what is socially natural. Giant empires based on slavery, capitalist fascist totalitarian dictatorships and even the totalitarian real-socialism, all shared the same fate [due to this alienation].

The fact that democracy declared its total victory at the end of this Century, the century of astounding production and technology, is no coincidence. This is closely related to the [functional operation] of democratic system's mechanisms. No other system has managed to render the society and the individual this creativity in their own naturalness. The democratic system obtains its power from freeing people. Democracy is simple, but develops slowly. However, without a doubt, the results it bore in our times are more impressive and rapid than those a most powerful regime can afford. Democracies possess mostly an evolutionary language, but essentially, they rest on revolutions. The most crucial thing to know is when to democratize a revolution. Revolutions that fail to democratize might either lead to dictatorship or deteriorate into anarchism. Revolutions that succeed in democratizing life become permanent and manage to bring about creative development. To become stuck to a revolutionary stage is to become stuck to bureaucracy as much as to counter-revolution. It is this [principle] that constitutes the secret of past and present success of the mightiest societies that pursued successful democratization.

The theoretical — ideational dimension of today's democracies developed during the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The institutional and administrative developments relating to democracy gained momentum starting with the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, democracy resisted the totalitarian, unforgiving dictatorship of fascism and its adversary, real-socialism. It was at the end of the century that democracy announced its final victory. The two totalitarian systems, although producing rapid (economic) development, collapsed because of excessive suppression of the freedom and creative abilities in the individual and in society. Coercion could produce rapid development, but also a rapid downfall. Whereas the democratic system develops slowly, but it does not collapse easily. This is because the individual and society would not easily let go of it. Democracy derives its power from this. Society's enlightenment of itself, that is, its acquisition of scientific power [understanding] is mostly related to its level of democracy. Likewise, it is no coincidence that scientific and artistic talent develops in societies that provide the most freedom.

Even with the collapse of the socialist system in the 1990s and its transformation into [some form of] democracy, the great advance of democracy is still in the making. In a way, the remnants of other systems will continuously exert a pressure on democracy and a pure version of it could, one way or another, not be established. However, [more and more democratization] will be the trend of the future. The crucial thing is to apply democratic values to solve social problems and to rule the society. The best politics or

politician is the one that seeks its/his identity through the individual, the party and the leadership that represent power.

Generally speaking, societies where democracy is likely to flourish are the ones that — after manifesting their very sharp conflicts in the form of revolutionary explosions — choose to solve the rest of their problems (relating to conflicts in group's and individual's interests) through non-violent methods with the mediation of political parties and institutions. If and when a society matures to this degree, all it takes is to correctly identify the principles and institutions of democracy, and then, make them operational to solve existing problems. This requires creativity on the part of the political leaders and defines the democratic essence of political leadership.

The art of successful democratic politics requires the ability to correctly identify the interest groups, the nature of social conflicts and to balance the relations among them peacefully. It also includes the ability to handle power and the fall from the power.

The economic wealth of a nation or the lack of it cannot be the criteria for the practice of democracy. Democracy can be implemented in rich and poor countries alike. Perhaps the only condition that is required is to accomplish one or a few of the necessary revolutionary steps.

Democracy has little to do with political borders or with the existence of the state. Democratic systems do not deal with these issues. Democratic systems deal essentially with the interests, freedom and equality of the social groups and the individuals; and the rules and regulations that govern political institutions, governing, coming to power or losing power. National borders are a datum, a given. They are a framework within which policies are made and implemented. Coercion does harm democracy. Democratic politics does not relate to the existence of the state or its indivisibility. It relates intensely, though, to the forms of the state, how it handles social problems, its rules and regulations, how it selects and delineates political-moral values, the issue of representation and harmonious-peaceful transfer of power. The recognition of the rights and freedoms for those individuals and groups that lack them, and the incorporation of these actors into the system are also one of the essential political and moral requirements of democracy. As long as there are oppressed and powerless individuals and strata who lack basic freedom and rights, that democracy has major shortcomings. If conflicts and tensions are not solved peacefully, rebellions, civil wars, insurgencies and other revolutionary conflicts would break out and cause bloodshed, ushering in perhaps a new democratization process.

Democratic development in societies dominated by dogmatism, authoritarian principles and institutions, requires above all, a struggle with these hurdles. What feeds the authoritarian and the totalitarian regimes is such dogmatism and traditionalism.

Democracy has its own principles, institutions and traditions too. They are freedom, equality, lack of oppression, evolutionary development, respect for rights and responsibilities and consensual solutions. Democracy is closely related to scientific [objective] definition of the society and [the need for] its enlightenment. With such qualities,



democracy is a wonderful way of creating mature, responsible individuals and social classes.

This comprehensive framework in which we have defined democracy, very clearly shows as to why democracy is both the cause and the outcome of scientific-technological developments and the enlightened society.

The failure of the suffocating totalitarianism of fascism and bourgeois nationalism, and the excessive egalitarian totalitarianism of the working class are related to having moved out of the democratic framework described above. It seems that the democratic system has insured its victory into the 2000s and cannot be stopped spreading in depth to all societies. It is certain that those who resist this [wave of democratization] will lose while those who implement it will surely win.

## **Turkey's Agenda for the 2000s**

Developments during the last 150 years of modern history that we have presented here in very broad outlines, point to the victory of democracy. This process of democratisation could be successful in Turkey if very serious mistakes are avoided especially in democratically solving the Kurdish problem; if the Turkish left manages to transform itself into legal political parties and the Islamic movement assimilates democratic ideals.

The democratisation of those who approach this process from a narrow, opportunistic and selfish motive cannot go beyond demagoguery. One must see in depth that Turkey is going through an important period that is qualitatively different. Recent history, while inheriting a heavily centralised feudal tradition that was devoid of democracy, has been stuck in a stage of producing no solutions as a result of devastating blows of the frequent coups and counter-coups, revolutions and counter-revolutions. A very tense society that is resistant to democratic openings, state officials who have always viewed democracy with suspicion, intellectuals who have stood aloof to any struggle for democratic values, are all fundamental aspects of this problem. Truly, the Republic could have realised a lot less onerous path of democratisation. The process [of democratization] in Turkey has been truly hard, as the same is true for other countries. Turkey failed to have a democratic system due to lack of conviction, serious efforts and a true understanding of democracy (as opposed to demagoguery). In the name of democracy, the demagoguery always ruled. That is, in the name of democracy — ism, a play was staged in an ugly way with an accompanying rhetoric that both concealed and served to vested interests. There could be no place for demagoguery any more. The process (period) we are going through right now will either lead to an enduring, truly democratic republic with its social milieu, institutions, administrative structure and real democratic ideals, or it will lead to the repetition of more of the same. The [Turkish] society has matured and is ready for democracy and its system of peacefully solving problems. Political parties [in Turkey] have learned their lessons

to a great extent. Dysfunctional institutions have been exposed. An effective administration would not fail to obtain the sustained support of the people. The military as the most ready institution is inclined to turn this process in favour of democratisation, but at the same time, has no intention of relaxing its control of society.

As one of the most serious problems [of Turkey], if the Kurdish problem is solved in a way that incorporates the [Kurdish] guerrillas and the PKK in an appropriate democratic system that can solve the problem, it will be a permanent victory for democracy. The integration of Islam as represented by the RP/FP has already been accomplished to a good extent. Here is what awaits Turkey on the horizon: the, at least, two hundred year old effort toward Westernisation would finally bear its fruit. Violence embedded in society and the social structure that played an important role in moving the centuries forward [engine of change] will lose its meaning and be dumped to the dustbin of history. Not only violence has become unnecessary, but also, due to increasing apathy and stagnation of society, will not even be noticed. Even if society in Turkey has truly reached to some degree of maturity, political institutions and cadres have not yet set an effective and well-established pace of progress. This is where the trouble lies. Lack of any other alternative makes the democratic solution the only option.

The democratic option (alternative), as it is in other matters, is the only alternative in [solving] the Kurdish question. Separation is neither possible nor necessary. Kurdish interests are definitely best served in a democratic union with the whole of Turkey. If the democratic solution is fully implemented, it would become even a more successful and realistic model than autonomy and federation. Even at this very moment, developments are all pointing in this direction.

If Turkey solves its toughest problem in this manner, violence in all its forms, be it revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, military muscle flexing (such as under martial laws) or religious fanaticism, will rarely be an issue. A Western-style problem solving will considerably gain momentum. Then, economic resources, society's level of education, the non-demagogic administrative structure and loyalty to truly democratic values such as liberty, equality and justice, could make a great leap forward.

Even though similar approaches have been conceptualised in discussions on a Second Republic, we believe a democratic republic [envisioned in this defence] is a more correct approach. The 2000s [the new millenium] is imposing an evolution in this direction [toward a democratic republic], which, becomes more inevitable with every passing day. It is not hard to see that for those individuals, political parties and social groups that feel deeply about [the change], history is providing a chance to take a great leap forward, if they take the necessary steps. While the need is increasingly making this search [for peace and democratisation] as the urgent item on the agenda in need of a solution, the absence of a leader [as an interlocutor for peace] is sorely missing. Distrust created by worn out politicians, lack of a complete understanding of the armed forces' role, the weakness of an evolutionary and fear of a revolutionary leadership, have all led to the current leadership crisis of the democratic system.

## A short history and some fundamental characteristics of Turkish-Kurdish relations

The arrival of Turks — and in particular of Turkmens who broke away from their ruling elements — in the areas heavily populated by Kurds in the tenth century, led to the intermingling of the two peoples. The relatively more settled way of life of the Kurds led to the absorption of the Turkish tribes in these centuries. In political organisation the Turks, and in social organisation the Kurds were relatively dominant. While the Turkish upper strata in general took over the local political culture and achieved dominance, the lower orders on the whole were absorbed by the Kurds. The socio-economic and cultural and religious similarities between the two peoples play an important role in this intermingling. The feudal social structure is quite similar in both settled and nomadic tribes. Such, in brief, are the foundations of the brotherhood of the Turks and Kurds that is often alluded to.

When we look at history we see that, especially in the Seljuk Empire set up in Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Kurdish lands and later with the Mervanis, Artukogullaris, Ayyubis and the Akkoyunlus and Karakoyunlus, and many small states, the Turkish and Kurdish upper social strata and therefore the social orders under them share a common land and state. Rather than being in conflict with each other, they live in harmony in close proximity to one another. With no other nation — be it the Arabs, the Iranians, Armenians or Byzantines — is such a concept of a common state shared. This is how the Kurdish Turk or Turkish Kurd is born. It is important to bear this in mind as an outstanding characteristic in order to make sound objective assessments. It is important to have such a scientific approach to the brotherhood of Turks and Kurds.

We see a striking example of this phenomenon on a very high level in the Ottoman-Kurdish relations which begin with Selim I. Despite Selim's wish to the contrary, the dominant Kurdish lords chose not to set up a separate state, but felt their interest were better served by staying under the umbrella of the same state under a governor sent by the Sultan himself. This approach led to success against the Saffevs of Iran in the battle of Caldiran and against the Arabic Mamluks in the battles of Ridaniye and Mercedabik. Under this arrangement, the Kurds continued to develop until the early nineteenth century. Their language and culture developed to a high degree. Only very rarely were there problems. This was largely due to the large measure of autonomy granted to the local governments under the umbrella of the common state, independent tribal structures, and the freedoms enjoyed in the fields of language and religion by all except the Alevis. What we see here is a multi-layered, rich experiment in government that can set us an example even today.

This system started falling apart in the nineteenth century as a result of the Empire's failure to compete with Western capitalism. The British Empire in particular entered

into the region and the central authority upped its demands regarding taxation and military service; a process of rebellion was put in motion that continues to this day.

It is highly typical that, while the rebellions by all the other nations were successful, these rebellions failed despite being on such a large scale. The reason for this is once again the concept of a common land and a common state that is such a fundamental guiding principle. Some of the rebels were always on the side of the state. Breaking away is not what their outlook or policy is fundamentally about. They are more interested in securing advantages and concessions. Their attitude is one of “If you don’t give it to me, I’ll get in touch with this or that foreign power and rebel”. This is not only the fundamental characteristic but also the misfortune and tragedy of Kurdish uprisings. It is an exaggeration even to look at these uprisings as progressive or reactionary, political or national. That is not their fundamental nature. That is more of a cover story. They are directed more by the self-interests of tribal leaders and by dynastic and family concerns, and they deepen the impasse, filling the history of the Kurdish people with suffering and massacres and leading not to progress but ruin. It is important to reassess these rebellions which have no philosophy, no political programme or organisation, have two leaders even within the same tribe or family in every rebellion, seldom abide by military rules, and consequently always end up failing. Indeed their belief in success is practically non-existent. They are spontaneous and primitive. It is clear that it is not possible to reach anywhere on the basis of following whoever offers the most. This is where the tragedy and misfortune lie. One is tempted to say, “It would have been better if their history did not consist of these uprisings.” This is once again the reason. Undoubtedly, the entry of imperialist forces, oppression by the central authority and increased demands regarding taxes and military service play an important role. But the most fundamental cause, as often mentioned in our day, is the notion of a common country, being one of the fundamental original elements of the state, assimilation between the two peoples, their having gone through many a war together, or, in other words, their being close to one another in destiny and joy, the dangers of separation, and their historical knowledge of all they stand to lose. These have led to a fundamental notion of togetherness. Even at the start of the twentieth century, when everything was being done to provoke nationalism, this notion was preserved and a successful war of national liberation was waged together.

## **The War of National Liberation and a new stage in Turkish-Kurdish relations**

In both the last Parliament and at the meetings and congresses led by Mustafa Kemal at Amasya, Erzurum, Sivas and Ankara, national liberation was clearly seen as a joint liberation effort by Turks and Kurds. This was not only the right and practical path, but also the one demanded by the historical notion of a common country and

state. To engage in separate, and especially opposed, struggles for liberation would have played into the hands of the “divide and rule” policy favoured by the imperialists of the day and especially by Great Britain. Here Mustafa Kemal’s political outlook tested and developed by realities is clear and it is the only possible one. Without going overmuch into the theoretical reasons, he maintained unity virtually by ordering it, and that was what was needed at the time. This was so, because there were those on both sides who were working hard, with a good deal of help from the Sultan and Caliph, to cause a rift, and national liberation was a movement against these uprisings as much as against external enemies. What counts here is not intention but practice. Even within Parliament those in favour of the sultanate and the caliphate were quite powerful until 1924. Having to contend with these and also with the followers of the old Ottoman Union and Progress movement and with Bolshevik influences, the leading power had to follow intense and different tactics. Add to this the extensive claims of ethnic Greeks in the West emboldened by the Greek attack on Turkey, and equally extensive claims by the Armenians in the East, and it was obvious that national liberation had to be based on the two fundamental peoples, the Kurds and the Turks. If the two nations went their separate ways, and especially if they acted against each other, they would end up losing all they had. It is useful to explain some matters here which have not been gone into in depth: the national liberation movement was undoubtedly led by the Turkish side which was the one with the political and military experience and the developed national consciousness. Not only was this not opposed, it was expected. The Kurdish side found this natural and was not uncomfortable or anxious about being an auxiliary force under command. The notion of a common history, state, country and religion was fundamental here, and no one doubted that the struggle for national liberation would be waged together as well. Contrary to what has been maintained by some intellectuals, there was no question of deception or being deceived here. What was happening was the necessary outcome of natural togetherness. This was definitely the right strategy and it amounted to a unified tactical understanding. One has to admire Mustafa Kemal and those leading the movement. It is a mistake to think of the Kurdish side as collaborators during this period. They did the right thing, but suffered from an important lack of consciousness and organisation as far as the negative developments that would occur in the future were concerned.

An important impasse would eventually develop on both sides on this point, when in fact the beginning was absolutely right and the successful national liberation struggle and the Republic proclaimed at the end of it are in fact a beautiful joint achievement. Indeed, at the press conference in Izmit — and it is important to bear in mind that this took place after the proclamation of the Republic — Mustafa Kemal gave a speech which can still offer guidance today, and in which he clearly states that Kurdish and similar problems can only be solved by the establishment of a democratic style.

Given the state of mixed areas and the insoluble problems likely to be caused by border changes, a type of local autonomy, the method employed today everywhere in the world in democracies and proposed by Mustafa Kemal, is once again the correct

solution for this problem. However, because the caliphate and the sultanate had powerful support on both sides and because some primitive Kurdish intellectuals could not detach themselves from imperialism, could not share their programme with the Turkish Parliament under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal and became narrow-minded separatists, they ended up participating in the uprising of 1925, even though they were not in any way ready for it. In fact, however, they did not have such an intention at the start. A large portion of them were state officials and army officers who supported the national liberation movement. Meanwhile, in the case of the local tribal and religious leaders, a combination of their ideological opposition to the Republic, the threatening of their material interests, and their relations with Istanbul and hence with the Allied powers was to drive them to the same wrong course in an untimely and unprepared manner. These were people who had supported the national liberation movement, believing it would result not in a republic but the restoration of the sultanate and the caliphate, when this did not happen, they rebelled. As will be seen from this, limited Kurdish nationalism was not a fundamental factor in the uprising. The uprising was a weak affair, without a programme, disorganised and leaderless. The masses and most of the upper-class intellectuals chose to support the Republic. This rift that occurred on the Kurdish side occurred in a more intense manner on the Turkish side.

There were more open exponents of the sultanate and the caliphate, the old Unionists were not happy with the Republic and as the Progressive Republican Party they represented the conservative wing and from time to time achieved a majority. During the uprising of 1925 Mustafa Kemal would objectively treat all these elements as a unified force with a common aim and firmly proceed to eliminate them. If one pays attention, it is clear that they are not seen as a special democratic group on the Turkish side and a Kurdish nationalist group on the Kurdish side. In any case, such a situation does not clearly arise. What is being debated is not the democratic nature of the Republic. Such a question is not on the agenda apart from the interjections of a few faint voices. The fundamental question is the protection of the Republic which is but a year-or-two-old. At least this is definitely so for Atatürk. He does not say, "I am crushing democrats and Kurds"; he says, "I am eliminating those opposed to the Republic." This might perhaps be a little extreme, but it is a realistic approach. Let us imagine one of the other two sides triumphing. Sultan Vahdettin was ready and waiting. In other words, what would have come was neither democracy nor an independent Kurdish state, but a sultanate collaborating with the British. This is the truth. There was no third way. The weak communist movement, which could not even save itself from being defeated by simple tactics, could hardly achieve power.

The triumph of the national liberation movement and of the Republic must therefore be seen as an historic common country and state for the two peoples. One cannot ascribe to Atatürk either a particular opposition to democracy or to Kurds. He was for progress and had expectations. The lack of intellectual depth, the absence of any experience of democracy, feelings of being under siege by domestic and foreign forces and of weakness; the reality of these things led to an authoritarian concept of the

Republic at an early stage and render the concept of violence open to criticism. If Fethi Okyar, who can be seen as an unsuccessful liberal intellectual of the period — and who, it must be borne in mind, was a close friend and colleague of Atatürk's — had been successful, the Republic could have become more liberal and eventually more democratic. But the harsher and more bureaucratic premiership of Ismet Inonu, who was put in power by the uprising, played an important role in this authoritarian development.

Although influenced by Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia, he nevertheless did not want to render the Republic founded by Ataturk authoritarian in the extreme. This can also be seen in the Free Party incident which is the second liberal experiment with Fethi Okyar. He was for a liberal development, but did not have the power to grasp the philosophical and social foundations this required. Subsequent Kurdish uprisings must be assessed along similar lines. Indeed, the traditional inability of the local powers to toe the general line, their traditional habit of doing as they pleased, and limited foreign influences, play a role, and this means that they had little chance of success against an increasingly powerful republic.

This is how the authoritarian republicanism of the Atatürk period appears within its concrete reality. It is a major error and injustice to blame the Republic and Atatürk for not moving in a more liberal-democratic direction and especially for Kurdish uprisings and the inability to produce anything more than these uprisings of a society which does not follow its national movement but — and exceptions do not change the rule — is led by scattered and disorganised local lords. Furthermore, it leads to the adoption of the wrong approach and leads to extremism, and this leads intellectuals, Islamicists, socialists and Kurdish nationalists to major errors of assessment, and indeed action. Had the claims that are made been true and had they had a material basis in that period, surely they would have achieved some success. Something that has a basis in reality will be successful. At most, this can be seen as an important historical experience both for democracy and the Kurdish question which is a part of it. It is hard to say it has yet been assessed properly. Those who do not assess history correctly will have great difficulty assessing the present and themselves correctly. This will often lead to failure, and where it leads to success, success will come about as a result of the chains of coincidences that are often encountered in social affairs.

The Kurdish ideological and political movements that fail to assess the founding of this Republic and its authoritarian development correctly end up creating by this means the fundamental reason for their tragedy and defeat. As an act of self-criticism it would be closer to the truth to express the real situation regarding this period as follows.

What should have been done was to accept unconditionally the Republic and the reality of a common country pertaining to it, then to seek democratic solutions for social problems including the Ataturk personality within this framework by discussing them in Parliament, forming groups where necessary and finding solutions which, without ever becoming reactionary or separatist, would carry the same republican and national

unity principles, but in a more democratic way, to many social units. New parties and alliances should also have been tried, democracy should have been allowed to become widespread as in many European countries, and the republican revolutionary movement should have been taken forward through democratic evolutions to a democratic republic. This would have been the right solution and it still cannot be implemented today. The Democratic Party came to power by almost creating a democratic storm on the basis of the pressures exerted by the authoritarian republic and in general by two world wars. Or rather, by adding to the general power structure, land-owners and the expanding mercantile upper class, it transformed the character of the republic in the direction of an oligarchy. It was the suppressed feudal dignitaries of the East and the newly emerging land-owning bourgeoisie and the mercantile upper class of the West that became prominent during this period in the history of the Republic.

In this period, the Kurdish question manifests itself in the form of returning from exile after the period of suppressed uprisings, the binding of wounds, and a very weak ideological Kurdism. This is a very weak bourgeois-feudal Kurdism. They still have intellectuals, but their activities remain ideological. They do not seriously form parties, do not become a movement, and their ideological activities are not very scientific or comprehensive. They are some way behind even the state of affairs at the start of the century. Although, under the leadership of Barzani, they are influenced by and try to make use of the Turkish left, here, too, they fail to establish a structure with character. In brief, they stay considerably behind the uprisings of the feudal period and fail to transcend the classical collaborationist-cum-separatist stance of the dominant class. They fail to establish the correct definition of the Republic and the correct approach to it. The fearful and hollow criticism that is practised produces many a diseased personality. With the suppression practised during the period added to all this, a healthy Kurdish bourgeois national movement fails to materialise. Their failure to analyse from a Kurdish point of view the fact of the Republic being a fundamental element and to develop an approach which is not separatist but seeks equality and freedom pushes them into the old state of affairs where even the smallest criticism is seen as separatism. With the extreme accusations of extreme Turkish nationalism added to all this, the Kurdish Question, which is in fact a fundamental democratic problem, cannot as a rule even avoid being provoked. The branding of even a minimal democratic demand as separatism and treason led to its opposite, i.e. anti-democratic attitudes, becoming powerful as a result of the situation. Chauvinism and fascism grew strong. Even within the Turkish left this chauvinism was influential. The Kurdish movement which suffered physical elimination during the uprisings, could not save itself from ideological and political paralysis during this period. In fact it could not transcend its fundamental error. It could not come up with a successful democratic programme and an accompanying form of organisation that would present the common country and state analysis and the rights which were not granted and remained missing in this context. If it had been able to explain in a scientific and convincing way the Turkish and political and national forces, and state that the country was unified and separation from



the Republic was not an option; if it had adopted this method way back in the Atatürk period, the situation would have developed in the opposite direction, i.e. towards a democratic republic. Here, too, however, the fundamental responsibility rests with the upper social strata, the local lords and tribal leaders. The reactionary collaborationist and separatist and also undemocratic stance of this class born of its fundamental nature led the question into an impasse from the start despite a very important beginning, and gave rise to profound tragedies and losses. Kurdish intellectuals always blame all this on the Republic. In reality, their failure to question their own fundamental, albeit class-based role in this, is the real reason the Kurdish Question has become intractable. The failure, despite an oligarchic struggle and a quite serious conflict between the right and the left during this period, even to pose the question correctly was to be influential in the emergence of the PKK.

## **The Emergence of the PKK and a New Stage in the Kurdish Question**

The indictment of the Chief Prosecutor contains a picture of the PKK. Like all pictures, however, it is devoid of spirit. It is not enough to present the bill for an entire war and actions of a large scope. Again, to determine the objective on the basis of the initial programme and to demonstrate it with some extracts from speeches by the leadership without being influenced by the changes and transformations in the world during the last quarter of a century, might perhaps endow the indictment with meaning from the point of view of legal procedure, but it clearly cannot exactly express its political significance. There is an accusation of wanting to found a state, but who is going to found this state? If it is the people, what sort of historic and social reality do they have? Again, is it possible objectively, i.e. from a scientific point of view? Not to mention such matters at all will prevent it from being anything more than a subjective legal text heavy on accusation. Indeed, even from a legal point of view, it will only be one-sided in this state. We are of the opinion that to express the true nature of the PKK here in terms of theory, politics and action is a historic duty and it will supplement the indictment and provide a reply to it. We will not discuss its legal side in any detail. If there is an opportunity, perhaps some of our lawyers could go into that. How then should the PKK be approached?

The PKK is the last major Kurdish rebellion movement which was created and developed by an utopian theoretical group given to the study of the stormy revolutionary and counter-revolutionary movements in the world, and which pursued ideological rebellion in the period from 1970 to 1980 and politics and action in the period from 1980 to 1990. It has taken major steps in uniting politics with the art of war, and is an unique liberation movement which, while Kurdish in form, is regional in character. It has presented the Kurdish Question in a way that transcends the classical approach

to it, and is a Kurdish Question movement that is modern and democratic in terms of its social basis, objectives and tactics. In other words, as well as developing the Kurdish Question into maturity, it has, for the first time, brought to the solution the democratic style of working-class elements. It is a movement which is characterised by these factors. It has developed the question into maturity and rendered it highly capable of being solved by abandoning and rendering void the approach of traditional dynastic leaderships based on relying on outside powers and, in the event of finding no help from such a quarter, capitulating immediately. It has found its place on the stage of world history as a lasting movement which is based on free individuals and a free society and is thus both quite modern and capable of offering a genuine social solution. Until the 1990s it was concerned with proving the existence of the problem to Turkey and to the world and asking for a solution, and in the 1990s it progressed by having the solution placed on the agenda. While its inability to grasp the solution at the start of the 1990s resulted from lack of preparation, errors and lack of experience, from 1993 onwards it was in a period of difficulties and turmoil. It was indeed in this period in the 1990s that it should have transformed itself. Especially its failure to detect world-wide developments after 1993 and to be creative in terms of a solution can be seen as a defect. It repeated itself excessively in this period. Consequently, it moved away from its capability for a solution and caused the problem to worsen again. Undoubtedly, the derailment, on both sides, of the style of war it followed played an important role here. With misfortunes added to all this, the problem worsened. As we approach the year 2000, should the PKK manage to solve its contradictory position of both having to transcend itself and once again directing the problem towards a solution, it will have played its historic role. It can bring this about by transforming itself from a revolutionary organisation into a democratic organisation.

As far as the separatism-versus-union question is concerned, it is important to distinguish between two stages in the history of the PKK. During the process of its emergence, years of oppression and denial extending as far as the banning of the Kurdish language, the utopian approach based on simple slogans then dominant on the left, the separatism born of the fear and anxiety within Kurdish nationalism, and the perception on the part of national liberation movements all over the world that the only solution was a separate state, led to a heavy emphasis on separatism in the programme and propaganda of the PKK. There was often an emphasis on international unity, but the dominant side had broken away from the existing union brought about by force. We often compared this to a marriage brought about by force and said it could not last. In a sense, this was a valid approach. But answers had to be found as to what extent and in what way. This period extended as far as the nineties. Together with mass support, the need arose to transcend this period at about this time. In other words, the foundations were being laid for a free union. The lifting by the state of the language ban, the limited freedoms granted in the areas of language and culture, the acceptance of the problem by senior statesmen and their efforts to solve it, and finally my own ceasefire approach in March 1993 clearly indicated a period when both sides were emphasising

a free union. After this point free union propoganda becomes dominant. From 1996 onwards our verbal and written responses to the indirect messages we received were openly based on the principle of “democratic union within the framework of the unity of the country and the independence of the state”. This was due to a very large extent to both the state transcending its former harsh approach and it becoming clear that, in practice, separatism was not a realistic option and entailed too much pain and loss. Life was showing us more clearly every day what was true and a basis for union. Consequently, I regard it as a great defect that, in its indictment, the Office of the Chief Prosecutor regards this as a simple tactical manoeuvre and fails to assess it as an important transformation. The call for a democratic Republic and a democratic union must be seen as not only a piece of strategy but also a solution indicated to, and made inescapable for us, by the struggle itself.

## **The Role Played by Kurds in the History of the Republic, the Kurdish Question and Its Solution**

The classical narrow legal approach is undoubtedly inadequate in terms of assessing and judging the PKK in the correct manner. Again, it cannot be presented correctly through the primitive separatist approach any more than it can through the traditional nationalist approach based on denial. If Turkey wants to get rid of this most important problem, she has to unearth the facts by applying the scientific standards of the historical and social approach to opt for a conciliatory solution. Assessments which do not take into account the social reality of the PKK and the existing political system, and which have got particularly subjective of late, can neither destroy the PKK nor attract it to a solution. If both sides soften the language used in their propoganda and adopt a more objective approach, the problem will slowly stop being intractable and it will be possible to take it towards a solution. Hardline ideological and political approaches are not in keeping with the need for a democratic solution that characterises this period. If the Kurdish question is treated in the context of the Republic and a solution is sought, it will be seen that the PKK phenomenon is the most mature instrument for a solution. In historical terms it is very important to pose and answer some questions openly. Everyone now gives voice to these. If the Kurds are one of the founding members of the Republic — and they are — why did the displaying of their identity became the greatest problem in the period of founding and development? What are the historical errors committed by both sides? And in order to solve the problem it is now inevitable that Kurds should be scientifically redefined as one of the fundamental dynamic elements of founding and development, and they should also be defined as conscious free citizens and a social group of the Republic, and their share in the general constitutional rights and responsibilities should be indicated. If this is not done, the completely unscientific old method whereby everyone draws conclusions that suit their

self-interests of the moment will become the dangerous basis of this matter. Some will use it to seek an undemocratic voter base, others will make it the target and subject of nationalism and others still will find in it grounds for rebellion. It is indisputable that, despite all its utopian and extreme political approaches, the PKK played an historic role by presenting the problem and the need for a solution in the most striking way and by making a solution necessary. Its methods, its hardline political approach and its confusion of being ideological with being political notwithstanding, it has no equal and it has left a large and rich legacy to history. In this sense, it has paid the highest price not only to have the existence of Kurds accepted but also to stop it being a problem. It has lost almost 25 thousand members, more than 10 thousand of its members have been sentenced to prison for almost 20 years, millions have been forced to move, it has suffered great hardship and made great sacrifices in the war, and more than 3,000 thousand villages belonging to the masses from it derives its strength from have been emptied. These facts not only indicate the source of the problem, they also indicate the fact that a solution must be found. If one adds to this the other side of the war, i.e. the losses suffered by the state, the dimensions of the problem and the overwhelming need for a solution will become apparent. The profound effects on domestic and foreign politics and the socio-economic structure and indeed the virtual deadlock that has developed in these areas make it still more necessary to find a solution.

In reality Turkey and the Republic have to a large extent become familiar with this aspect of the phenomenon. However, the heavy official rhetoric and the timid approach to finding a solution have turned into a problem. We must admit the following to ourselves. We have always lived with this phenomenon and we will continue to do so. That being the case, why not become known as an unproblematic, free, dynamic and democratic element of progress and become the power, the free democratic power of the Republic? Why balk at this? Why should the transformation of a founding element into a recognised element with democratic participation be against the constitution and the law? If anything is wrong, it is this constitution and these laws which are against the fundamental principles of the Republic. What needs to be changed is not the phenomenon but the laws that cannot express it adequately and in a democratic manner. This aspect of the laws has played an important role in the worsening of the problem. In fact this situation does not exist in the founding assembly of the Republic and in the Atatürk of the founding period. Here, notwithstanding its amateurish and utopian emergence and its errors as regards its methods of action, the PKK has rendered the Republic a genuine service by saying, "See and solve the problem that has troubled you for so long". In this sense, it has tried to play a role as important as that played by the Kurds as a liberated and founding nation in the history of the Republic: it has tried to play a role in its transformation into a democratic republic. With their rebellion in the form of the PKK the Kurds have proved the following: If you don't recognise our freedom, separatism and rebellion will always be on the agenda. Either I enter into a free union with you or I die or run away. This is what they have ended up saying. This is what the rebellion has expressed. The PKK has arrived at the nearest

level of maturity for a free union. Seeing this is its history. Not to see this cannot be regarded as protecting the Republic and, above all, it cannot be regarded as defending it. To see the free union, which recently expressed itself through the millions of votes cast for the HADEP party and to take it to a democratic union with the legal system of the Republic is the correct way to defend the Republic. The PKK is a movement of consciousness and free will that has shown that union cannot be achieved through the suppressed and frightened reality of the Kurds which ignorance has rendered almost unrecognisable, that the existence of such a group is not compatible with the enlightenment to be associated with the Republic, and that, if the Republic stands for enlightenment and freedom, it has to have these qualities for its founding member as well. The last elections have demonstrated this clearly. In this sense, the PKK is the historical reality of the correct definition and free union which are the rights of the Kurdish people under the Republic. If this historical reality is fully successful, it needs to be said in the last section of the indictment not that the PKK calls for a separate state, but that it very clearly calls for a democratic republic and is the founding force for such a republic. History may not state this clearly today, but sooner or later it will do so. With the PKK, history is unearthed, corrected and also provided with a solution. Just as the Kurds were among the National Forces during the struggle for national liberation in the 1920s, as we approach the year 2000, they have been a democratic force with the PKK, with all the correct and incorrect actions, and all the suffering and happiness that entails. This is not separatism but perhaps a move for the greatest union with Turkey and the Turks, a move towards strength and once again becoming a leader in the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans. There is no way of achieving this other than through a free union. The PKK has also served to prove this. Nothing can be more powerful than reality and this is especially true for laws. To be not for separatism but for union at this historic crossroads regarding the PKK it is necessary to see and define this dominant aspect of reality.

## **Transformation Problems within the PKK**

It is a striking fact that towards the end of the twentieth century social and political systems have undergone major changes and transformations and those resisting these changes and transformations have not been very successful. Essentially, systems which cannot answer the needs of individuals who have become free as a result of the scientific-technological revolution are under great stress. No matter how they try to patch things up, they are in difficulties, and regardless of their attempts at suppression changes are taking place on a level and with a speed not encountered in any other period. It is as if we are experiencing the social and political repercussions of the atomic age. Socialism, which represented the highest stage of democratic progress and its most egalitarian and free expression at the start of the century, and which, beginning with the upheaval in Russia, went on to exert considerable pressure on capitalism which

was evolving towards a single system, has virtually died though shortness of breath. This of course happened because, like many systems, socialism was rigid, and because it could not open channels within the system to the freedom and equality that are part of its essence, and it failed to carry forward to the people the positive developments in both the economic and the political fields experienced and partly carried forward to people even under capitalism, it brought about its own downfall. Its experience of a type of intense sectarianism also encountered in religions was also a factor here. This of course does not mean that socialism left no positive legacy. The historic role it played in bringing about the social and national institutions that characterise our age and in the emergence of classes and nations enjoying a greater degree of equality cannot be disputed. What capitalism had achieved in only a limited way over several centuries, socialism exceeded in half a century. Its inability to provide a solution to the heavy global crises, in which capitalism played the fundamental role, is not entirely its fault. However, because it was held responsible for finding a solution, it either had to find one or go under. Because it did not find a solution, it went under. This is a development often seen in history. There is no doubt that it will flower again on its roots. Again it is inevitable that, regarding the basic human problems, socialism, i.e. scientific socialism as the expression of the solving of social reality by science, will flower again. It will form the antithesis to the thesis posed by contemporary capitalism with its great inequalities and especially its inability to cope with history, with nature and with many social problems. The socialist experiment, which has left a great experience behind it, will form a synthesis between its achievements and what it has to achieve. Especially in the areas of nature and the environment, women, children and population, history and culture, ethnic and religious minorities and the solution national situations and social imbalances will it be effective. It will achieve this by renewing its theories and combining this with the right practice. It will reach its period of maturity and renew itself by adding to the democracy that led to its downfall everything from the ways in which even capitalism can be used to the aforementioned ethnic and cultural groups, so as to reach its broadest democratic system. Just as capitalism incorporated the achievements of socialism into its own democracy, even allowing the founding of Communist parties and paying more attention to the human rights at the roots of socialism than socialism itself, and thereby outstripping socialism, the new socialism will incorporate all the values of not only capitalism but also all human history. It will face the dangers before humanity and reach its great potential for offering a solution. Those who respond in time to this law of evolution of the social dialectic will enjoy development, while those who do not will only suffer pain and be left under the wreckage of meaningless losses. In the context of the social transformations we are undergoing at an intense rate in our day, we see the application, virtually under laboratory conditions, of some law in some corner of the world every day.

Not to draw a conclusion from this is possible only if one is blind or extremely conservative. Even if change and transformation extend over the entire century in Turkey, which is one of the focal points where these general changes are experienced

in an intense manner, it would be true to say that, in the social sense, they have occurred to a greater extent during the last thirty or forty years experienced by our generation. This has involved socialism, the main ideology that had an impact on the period, and right-wing and religious ideologies that were struggling against it. The transfer of socialism to Turkey was conducted in a more eclectic, slavish and schematic manner than that of capitalism. Domestic social thinking was at a low level of development and dogmatic. It was thought that, instead of identifying and analysing social characteristics, it would be sufficient to apply socialism in a schematic manner to achieve progress. Socialists were prey to vapid generalisations and were slipshod in practice. It might be enough to say “There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet” to become a Moslem. Such an act might be important and significant in the context of its day, but socialism in Turkey in the 1970s was even more of a mechanical exercise and even more irresponsible. Socialists did not have an approach befitting the seriousness of their ideology. It bore a close resemblance to that “false belief” that believed easily and abandoned its beliefs when to do so suited its interests. In other words, a false faction was in existence. This was a degenerate style that dominated in general. Socialism was also partly just a fashion. In the superstructure, in the adherence to the official ideology, too, the same style obtained. Consequently, not only was the healthy form for social change, that is the main change needed in the period, not found, but things ended up in chaos. The chance to establish a democratic movement that would have provided the most results historically was lost, and extreme violence caused a reaction on the part of society at large. Inevitably, the classical right and conservative trends gained ground. Once again the law that states “if you can’t pose the right solution, you will go under” applied. The left, which espoused change, was unable to transcend its empty slogans and demagogical stance. The right was incapable of bringing about change. With the army exercising its traditional balancing function, these years were lost in a routine but very painful way along with the loss of many chance of development.

Although the PKK was born amid the whirlpool of these turbulent years, the open wound of Turkey and its all-too-obvious contradictions meant that this organisation did not have much difficulty in grasping the Kurdish Question and partly solving it in a manner that was nearly right. Consequently, it developed rapidly. Contrary to the claims made by some, this was not fundamentally due to violence. It was connected with that, but also with the level of social contradictions. This is like picking a ripe fruit on the principle of “Strike and it’ll drop”. Here the belief of the leader and the fulfilment of the requirements based on certain fundamental truths were enough for a start. It was especially easy to outstrip similar groups, cross official and unofficial barriers and to be striking with the very first actions undertaken by the organisation. Even an amateurish approach was sufficient. Even a decade was too much time to surpass similar groups, the ideologies of the system and feudal barriers. By the time the 1980s were reached, the system had been transcended both feudally on the local level and officially on the general level. It was clear that ideological and political systems

and barriers could no longer be a deterrent. This rested on the power of a socialism that was not understood in any depth and of Kurdish consciousness of history and society which were once again poorly examined and superficial. In other words, these were enough for an amateur movement. This is essentially how the development upto the 1980s can be explained. Only the army could stop this development, and indeed that was what happened. There was, however, a partial response to this in the form of the refuge found in the Middle East and the situation was partly transcended. This was how the army's traditional method of suppression was transcended by the time we arrived at the 1990s. Of course this did not amount to the defeat of the army. It was only a striking proof that the classical method of suppression of the army could be transcended, perhaps for the first time in history.

The response to this by the army and the state was the recognition of the Kurdish problem and the acceptance of a limited solution in official quarters. This was indeed an historic development. In the context of the realities of Turkey it was the ultimate point to arrive at, no matter how much one fought beforehand. The Kurdish reality whose main features as a founding element of the Turkish Republic were neglected, and which was suppressed and frightened into submission following its uprisings, allowed to stay backward and ignorant, and further distorted by the feudal style, had turned into an ugly monster, was recognised. On the founding of a new government, Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel said at Diyarbakir, "We recognise the Kurdish reality". The same point was made in a more comprehensive manner by President Ozal and became the first item on the agenda for all official and unofficial parties and milieus. This shows that there was a chance of solution. However, everyone was really unprepared and amateurish. The problem was a big one, but approaches to it were superficial. This was true of the PKK as well. A partial ceasefire was a bold move, but the parties did not have the necessary depth and preparation. With the traditional rebellious stance being dominant on the part of the PKK and the traditional suppressive stance being dominant on the part of the state, the chance of an historic solution was missed. Needless to say, opportunist politicians, provocations and the influence of outside powers played no small role here.

In reality, during this period the state was undergoing serious changes. The collapse of the Soviet Union and developments that genuinely affected Turkey in the aftermath of the Gulf War made it vital to find a solution for the Kurdish problem, and the route that would lead to this lay through a belated comprehensive democratisation. Here the PKK put up a resistance. It resisted by excessively repeating itself instead of developing itself. It thought this was the only solution. In reality, from the collapse of the socialist system it should have deduced a democratic solution. It should have seen that the principle of "self-determination of nations" was no longer valid, that scientific-technical developments had undermined the concept of the nation state produced by the developments from the seventeenth century onwards, that a solution based on developing democracy within the existing borders without altering these borders in any way was more realistic. To put it briefly, it should have abandoned its programme



dating from the 1970s and embarked on a new programme. It should have analysed Turkey again, taking into account the development the country had undergone both when it was being founded and in the 1990s, and it should have based its programme on these new developments. Socialist systems were collapsing all over the world, the Soviet Union was falling apart, and a blind and lame democracy was being looked to for a solution.

The PKK should have drawn important conclusions from this. Instead of espousing being a separate parts and a separate state, something that did not transcend an ideologically utopian rhetoric; instead of calling for being a separate part of a state, something which, in the context of the fundamental geography of the common motherland, would have been very difficult to realise — and, if realised, could not be maintained and was not necessary either. It should have opted for a democratic society within the same borders, the trend all over the world. It should have clearly seen and shown the free union of Kurds with the Republic. Especially with extreme intermingling, intense assimilation, and half the population being in a different geographical region, the solution to be arrived at and preferred was a deeper democracy. It should have found the language for this and, instead of the violence which got ever more degenerate and led to great pain and losses, should have moved towards a line of action that concentrated political-democratic activity. It should have acted in an expert and responsible manner and ended the war that was steadily getting dirtier. It should have seen that even continuous guerrilla activity against the army could play no other role than eventually arriving at the same solution and should have placed a controlled transformation into a political-legal alternative on its agenda.

After 1993, instead of insisting on guerrilla warfare and repeating this, it should have laid the ground work for this alternative. However much one may blame the cliques in government and the losses suffered by the guerrillas, the PKK should have seen the changes in both the world at large and the state at the start of the 1990s and come up with a response. Although it sensed this and felt the need for it, lack of experience and fear played an important role in preventing it. The PKK was not defeated during this period, but nor did it develop, because it was difficult to advance very far in its existing state under those conditions. This is the PKK's failure to see, to find a solution and to save itself from repetition. The Vth and VIth Congresses thus ended up becoming congresses of repetition in this sense. It will be seen from this that the PKK is genuinely at a major crossroads and it will either harden its traditional line further and continue its existence with the help of extensive domestic and foreign resources, or it will give up armed struggle on the basis of certain legal assurances, will make the unity of Turkey the basis of its programme and turn itself into an organisation that is based on transforming a better understood Kurdish society through political-legal action and organisation. This is definitely the historical stage that has been arrived at. This transformation, far from being seen as a renegade act or elimination, should be seen as a truly revolutionary transformation.

The alternative, i.e. the failure to achieve a transformation in the approach and nature of the organisation, will lead to extreme conservatism and eventually elimination. Or, like similar organisation, this, too, will descend into a hardline sectarianism. This reality, which is fundamentally experienced within the PKK but not formulated, clearly displays its need for transformation. To achieve a solution it is necessary not only to see the problem but also to prevent repetition as soon as possible, to prevent the loss of force and, without allowing disintegration, to move slowly with a common will from guerrilla warfare to an assurance-backed solution based on a democratic Turkey and towards the political-legal process and its line of action. Contrary to what is thought, this is not connected with the leadership but is a problem and a solution that goes considerably beyond the leadership and has considerable depth. The leadership at most speeds up the process. In many processes the leadership has in fact played a similar role. It is highly important to grasp this particular situation properly. Undoubtedly, it would have been healthier under free conditions. However, correct solutions demand and maintain their validity even if individuals are in captivity or in their graves. What is of defining importance here is the fundamental stage and the correct expressing of it and its need for a solution. Undoubtedly, the position of individuals, and especially, with the PKK, the position of the leadership, plays a defining role. If it has played a fundamental role, the leadership will last for a long time and its ability to offer solutions and its influence and power will continue. This is essentially how we can express the transformation problem within the PKK and its main platform.

How things will develop in practice in the long process before us depends on numerous factors; what we have to do is to foresee things and not allow ourselves to be caught in an unprepared state. At this stage in its history, the PKK should behave in a mature and self-confident manner while setting a new course for itself. It should not fail to see that self-examination and the identification of fundamental errors and mistakes is a necessity for a major organisation and movement, and failure to do this in time betokens, on the contrary, the weakness of an organisation. Some changes finish one off, others create history. To keep walking in the same way, repeating oneself all the time may tire one out, but, like a horse used to turn a wheel drawing water from a well, one will walk in circles and cover no real distance. The loss of creativity in the revolutionary struggle and the conservatism that comes with it must ultimately be transcended. Life will not tolerate those who stand outside it for long. A force that does not take life further turns into an obstacle, and life itself becomes the revolutionary reality and transcends the obstacles in its way. Sectarianism is living life in a twisted way. The PKK has undoubtedly not descended into this. It can comfortably stay on its traditional path and the gains that will accrue from this cannot be despised. However, it is clear that this cannot be achieved through simple confidence and established methods, but through the finding of the solution sooner or later.

Briefly, to reassess principles, the programme and the mode of action — this is as necessary as not to have done so despite the fact nearly a quarter of a century has passed — is dangerous. To achieve progress it is essential to examine with weary eyes

a major practical experience, and especially one that was undergone under the most backward social, national and international conditions in the form of a highly unusual rebellion-war. Not to do this will put one under a heavy responsibility before history. It does not matter if some criticise this; what matters is being able to respond to the requirements of the historical moment. Some do not want to see this, others see it but do not want to believe it. But what is correct and new always starts in this way. The picture of the PKK in the indictment will of course not change. A picture can only suffer erosion and become vague. However, the PKK is the free life not only of this nation but of a new humanity. The fact that it gave birth to itself by force does not mean that that is the way it is going to grow up. A child, too, comes into this world through a difficult birth, but then its natural development takes place without any difficulty. This is a law of nature. Qualitative leaps force things, but it is quantitative development that is fundamental. Why should it be wrong to apply this to human life and the life of an organisation as well? If everything ended the way it began or stayed the way it was, there would not only be no development but such a state of affairs would be contrary to the laws of nature as well. Especially if great resistance and force is being experienced in a phenomenon, it will either decay or renew itself and reach a new stage of development.

These dialectical truths indicate that the picture painted of the PKK in the indictment fails to establish a connection with its living reality. This might be sufficient to condemn it, but it will achieve nothing further than making social problems worse. As many examples in history indicate, to convict such a movement that has posed such a danger to the state, has exacted such a heavy toll in its war, has had an effect on so many political developments on a daily basis, has exerted pressure on more than ten governments and rendered them unsuccessful, on the basis of laws which are a long way behind social practice, is an example of great conservatism and will deprive the state of the reform it has to undergo and society of an important opportunity for democratisation. The right thing would have been not only to accuse, not only to point out what is right, but also to show how it could be achieved. The indictment has not been able to make good use of this opportunity, and it fails to transcend a traditional, one-sided and entirely negative condemnation. Both for the Republic and the PKK there is an historic environment and opportunity of conciliation as regards democracy in general and the Kurdish problem that lies at its roots in particular. If the Republic were to act maturely and see that democratisation would not be a loss but a gain and stop insisting, and if the PKK could see that to transform itself it must opt for conciliation with regard to the Republic and historical conciliation can only be achieved in this way, and if it were to take steps in this direction, there would be an enormous leap when the democratisation obtaining in society came together with a democratisation with the same frequency on the part of the Republic. Old laws are undoubtedly a major obstacle to this. New laws, on the other hand, will clear the obstacles, and the obstacles before the laws themselves will be cleared by political will.

In the PKK trial, the indictment and the defence have a chance of winning in a big way only by not dealing in opposites like greater/lesser and less guilty/more guilty and being magnanimous enough to use the wonderfully subtle creativity of politics to meet in this historic valley of conciliation, break the ice between them and end their estrangement. A new synthesis will be born out of the thesis and the antithesis. The State-PKK opposition will lead to the synthesis of a Democratic Republic and will be a victory. Life does not progress without contradictions, and, as stated by many official representatives of the Republic, in this greatest event, rebellion and conflict in its history, the Republic must choose not to strangle but to progress by resolving the contradiction. Nothing can be gained by strangling a baby that has been born in one's own bosom. But if the baby is allowed to lead its life and treated as one's own, it will add to one's strength, and this time round history will not end bitterly but move towards the peace which is demanded by the democratic world at large and has become the greatest need of this society, the great contradiction will have been transcended and the path to strength will lie open. The trial of the PKK in the person of its leader has this potential. If the judges in the court see the deep social reality under this trial, if they look at the history of democracy, and if they assess the laws, which they know very well but which have become an obstacle before society, together with these, they will be able to reach their historic verdict in a more objective manner. If they reach a verdict by considering not legal formalities but the essence of society, if they bear in mind not the present moment but the recent past and the near future, and if they make room for the historic approach that has often been seen in the history of justice, this will be an opportunity for the Republic. The PKK will change from allegedly being a force working to break up the Republic into one of the primary sources of its strength. The judges must be able to see this. It is an historic duty not to turn into a convict and opponent of the Republic a movement that has lost nearly twenty-five thousand of its members, has more than ten thousand members in prison, and has received one and a half million votes in the last elections. Even if it has its faults and errors, what is going on is, as is often officially expressed at middle levels, a war. Every war is followed by a peace, and if the state opens the door to peace, albeit in a limited way, it will be seen that the PKK is strong enough to treat the Republic with the respect it deserves. Otherwise, both sides will lose, our enemies will win, suffering will increase, and history will be the loser. What is expected from this trial is a verdict that will enable history to win sooner or later.

In conclusion, the PKK must bear in mind the great changes of the last quarter of a century and especially the actual change in the democratic structure of the Republic brought about by the Kurdish Question, and also bear in mind the legal system that is under pressure, and make in its programme and principles the changes that are expected from it and are rendered necessary in numerous ways by these changes. It should develop a political programme based on the concepts of a democratic Republic and a common country, giving up the demands of the utopian period which are no longer the only form freedom can take and, in any case, no longer work and have been

abandoned, and opting instead for the notion of free union; and it should render this programme official at a conference as soon as possible. Both sides can transcend the impasse only in this way. At a time when it is clear that the Republic has entered into a period of great democratisation as regards its social and ideological foundations, the PKK must abandon its programme influenced to a large extent by the socialist systems of the 1970s and a dogmatic approach to the reality of Kurdish-Turkish relations, and reach a programme of democratic politics in Turkey as a whole and, on a deeper and more detailed level, in Kurdish society itself. This will open the path to political-legal development and make it possible to transcend the impasse.

It is clear that in many countries problems, which in some cases had continued for centuries, have been solved by a softening of approach of this type, and the European democratic system is full of examples of this process. To insist on sticking to old ways is to insist on maintaining the impasse. Principles and programmes have a value if they exist to take life further. If they are making life difficult, changing them in keeping with concrete realities does not betoken a lack of belief or self-denial, but is a necessity. For such a great struggle not to make the necessary changes in its principles and programme is conservatism and dogmatism. Life is always on the side of principles and programmes that take it further. Whoever puts up a resistance against this will lose.

## **The PKK's Action Structure**

The Chief Prosecutor's Office states that they cannot present the entire reality as regards the PKK's action structure and, by selecting some acts, tries to make the PKK responsible for the cruel side of the rebellion and to strengthen the accusation of terrorism. However, from the start to this present day many top civilian and military officials have referred to the phenomenon as a rebellion and indeed the 28<sup>th</sup> rebellion, have spoken of it in veiled terms as a guerrilla war or, more scientifically, a war of medium or "low intensity"; and this is in fact the truth. Many books have been written on this subject and it has been explained scientifically. Although the phenomenon has many features that are unique to it, it is the common view of all leading experts that, of the many semi-rebellions and guerrilla wars, this is the most important one in the last quarter of the century. It is known that, the view it expresses for propaganda purposes notwithstanding, this is also the real view of the General Staff.

Consequently, if we abandon the language of propaganda and look at the action structure objectively, it is clear that a conflict involving a great deal of suffering and heavy losses on both sides, has claimed the lives of 5,000 members of the security forces according to the official figure, and of 20,000 members of the PKK, along with the 15,000 civilians killed on top of this, amounting to combined death toll of 40,000, has led to more than 3,000 villages being evacuated and caused more than 3 million people to be displaced, has involved the use of all types of aircraft, heavy artillery

and tanks, and has at times led to 40 or 50 thousand army personnel being involved in operations lasting weeks, cannot simply be called a war against terrorism. It can only be scientifically designated as war. In terms of the time it has taken, too, it is a comprehensive war that has lasted for 15 years. A conflict such as this of course has not only extremely important historical and social grounds but also political goals. The two sides express this every day through their propaganda. Consequently, the narrow label of “terrorism” is hardly adequate to describe the phenomenon. To define it as free war or rebellion would not only be more scientific but would also be the way to move towards the best solution. There have been many similar and different wars in history, but all of them have always ended with the restoration of peace and, in cases where this was unilateral peace, there have been various agreements until the restoration of a mutually agreed peace. They have given rise to very important social and political consequences leading to both development and regression. The most important question that needs to be asked here is what should be the best solution or best type of peace for this war. With this style of war the PKK has brought about a change in the Kurdish revolutionary tradition and shown that, rather than relying on a particular tribe or tribal leader or this or that foreign power in the traditional way, it can continue to exist on the basis of its own resources. However, it has become clear that the political formation expressed by the PPK as the ultimate goal of its programme is neither realistic nor necessary. Meanwhile, the state has seen that, in the conditions under which the war arose, it is pointless to deny the Kurdish reality, language and culture and, acknowledging this de facto and indeed de jure, has arrived at the point of agreeing to a solution leading to democratic development.

The reality of the 1990s showed that, following the perception of these truths, the war was moving towards peace. A meaningful peace was on the agenda in those years. It is extremely sad that it has not happened. If another decade passes, the point that is arrived at will still be the peace demanded by these actual conditions. The coming of the peace in conditions where society is becoming democratic and the state is responding to this positively is also the expression of an historic moment, and for the first time there is a chance that democratic conciliation will lead to this last rebellion being indeed the very last rebellion. To find the legal language for this is the fundamental problem of our age. Without being emotional and without seeing either the Republic or the PKK as an obstacle, the conflict must be viewed as a very sad one born of injustice and negligence between brothers, and a joint, brotherly move must be made towards the main reality, a peace under the democratic umbrella of the Republic. Serious accusations and demands for capitulation or a fight until the last member is killed can only increase suffering.

In brief, to view the action structure in this way would be both more scientific and lead to an approach that wins and develops the future. If this is not done, the foundations of new rebellions will be laid as was done in the past. The most fundamental conclusion to be drawn from the dates of wars, the dates of Kurdish uprisings, should be that we must find a way of establishing a social foundation that will prevent such

wars in the future and will not even give rise to isolated actions. Undoubtedly, this social foundation and the solutions related to it, can only be found through peace, the only valid democratic path. If society is presented with the democratic mode of expression, if this is made convincing through democratic channels and democratic action, and if the state is tolerant towards all this, the necessity for rebellion and action will disappear. As there is now a strong chance of solving the Kurdish Question, the significance of this war should be that it has demonstrated that it need not occur again; this last rebellion should be treated as indeed the last rebellion in history, and this should also be the legal interpretation of, and the legal verdict, on the matter.

## **The Biggest Problem in the History of the Republic Must be Solved Democratically**

The most regrettable aspect of the Chief Prosecutor's indictment is its refusal to refer by name to the Kurds who have been the biggest problem in the history of the Republic, are recognised as such by all leading politicians and military figures, and are accepted today as founding members of the Republic. This is a very backward approach based on denial and could have dangerous consequences. It would therefore be useful to indicate here through extensive quotation how the Kurds were viewed by Atatürk during the period of the founding of the Republic. To agree at least on these words by Atatürk would keep the opportunity for a solution on a reasonable level for everyone. These are the words that clearly express that Kurds were one of the pillars of the Republic that was the outcome of the victory in the struggle for national liberation. The following are Atatürk's instructions of June 1920 to Nihat Pasha, the commander at El Cezire, laying the foundations of Atatürk's policy with respect to the Kurds and Kurdistan:

“The Instructions of the Council of Ministers of the Grand Parliament of Turkey to the Commander of the El Cezire Front Regarding Kurdistan

1- It is a part of our domestic policy that throughout the country local administrations should be set up in which the masses are directly involved and influential. In Kurdish areas the setting up of a local administration throughout is necessary not only for our domestic policy but also our foreign policy.

2- The self-determination of nations is a principle accepted throughout the world. We, too, have accepted this principle. It is assumed that by now the Kurds have made their preparations for local administration, and their leaders and prominent personalities have been won over to our side for this cause, and when the time comes for them to express their wish, they will indicate that they are in charge of their own destiny and want to live under the will of the Turkish Parliament. It is up to the Commander of the El Cezire Front to see that all the work in Kurdistan is directed at the policy based on this goal.

3- General principles have been accepted such as driving the enmity between the Kurds and the French and especially between the Kurds and the British along the Iraqi border to a level where it cannot be resolved through armed conflict, preventing any alliance between the Kurds and foreigners, explaining the reasons for setting up local administrations throughout the country and thus making sure they are genuinely won over to our side, and giving Kurdish chiefs civilian and military posts.”

## **Mustafa Kemal, Leader of the Grand Parliament of Turkey**

In this set of instructions, the principal points of which are quoted above, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk recognises Kurds and Kurdistan at the very start of the national war for liberation, and, because the Republic was not then yet in existence and the Grand Parliament of Turkey existed instead, says they should rule themselves under the Parliament. This is the very phenomenon of local administration that is still being asked for. It is a kind of democratic autonomy. The indictment states that Kurds are not recognised and this is what makes the problem worse. The solution will come through recognition. And now let us look at Atatürk’s approach to the matter after the founding of the Republic. This is very similar to his initial approach and is more analytical. It is to be found in his answer to the question posed by Ahmet Emin Yalman at the Izmir Press Conference, and this answer was repeated at Eskisehir. This is what M. K. Atatürk says:

“The Kurdish question cannot be raised because of the interests of local Turks. Because, as you know, the Kurds within our national borders are settled in such a way that only in a very few areas there is a concentration of Kurds. Elsewhere, they are dispersed throughout the Turkish population and this has led to the development of such a border that if one wanted to draw a border separating the Kurds, one would have to devastate Turkey. There would have to be a border that went as far as, say, Erzurum, Erzincan, Sivas or Harput. Indeed, one must not forget the Kurdish tribes in the deserts of Konya. Therefore, instead of imagining a separate Kurdish nation, it is better to abide by our Constitution, under which a kind of local autonomy will in any case form. This means that in those provinces with a Kurdish population they will enjoy autonomy. Furthermore, as far as the Turks are concerned, it is necessary to give voice to their existence as well. If this is not done, it is only to be expected that they will regard this as a problem. The Grand Parliament of Turkey consists of both Kurdish and Turkish deputies, and the Kurds and the Turks, these two elements have united their interests and destinies. It would not be right to attempt to draw a border between them.”

It is possible to find many similar passages. This can never be denied. However, when the problem developed in a dangerous way in the wake of subsequent rebellions,



this approach was abandoned. What must always be borne in mind are the facts that Kurds and Turks are intermingled, their destinies are united, and drawing a border separating them would lead to ruin. But a solution was not developed. There is no denial here, but the complexity of the problem, the internal relations with the sultanate and the caliphate and the external ones with Britain led to suspicion, and the opportunity of finding a positive solution was lost. When the Kurds failed to unite within the Republic, mainly because of ideological reasons and their leaders, separatism brought about repression. The spirit that had obtained at the beginning was damaged. Estrangement and suspicion developed between the Kurds and the Turks, two elements which could not in fact do without one another. The possibility of the exploitation of the problem by foreign powers made it even more insoluble. That was the way the period ended, but the problem was to keep coming up.

It is clear that Kurds participated as founding members in the national struggle for liberation and the founding of the Republic and they are not together with Turks, it will be as if the Turkish nation has lost a foot and become lame. This has been proven again and again at all the important points in Turkish history, at the battles of Malazgirt and Caldiran. The united destiny of the two peoples and the brotherhood between them is the outcome of this history. The history or rebellion should not allow us to forget this. In any case, the rebellions were mainly a struggle for dominance between the central authority and Kurdish feudal lords. It is well known that the latter were not really acting out of nationalist fervour but were interested in achieving local dominance for their tribe and furthering its interests. It is also a historical fact that they moved over to the side of whoever supported these interests. The Kurdish problem is encountered mainly as a tribal problem, i.e. a problem born of a culturally and socio-economically backward social structure. Especially in the course of the history of the Republic, the narrowly nationalistic and separatist unscientific approach adopted by both sides has raised the problem to dangerous levels and made a solution difficult.

There are in fact approaches that almost amount to a solution during the period of the national struggle for liberation and the founding of the Republic. As indicated by the passages quoted above, the approaches adopted by Atatürk during the period prove this, as do the waging of the national struggle for liberation and the founding of the Republic together on the basis of a common war and a common country. A further proof is the way deputies are allowed to wear their national costumes and use their national language in the Grand Parliament of Turkey. Even the Kocgiri rebellion ended with an amnesty and conciliation during this period. A hardline approach did not find favour in the Grand Parliament. This is very evident in the Nurettin Pasha incident. If this had been continued, the problem would not have got worse in that period, would not have weakened the Republic, and would not have had such a heavy cost. Here the main problem consists of establishing links with the sultanate and the caliphate before the Republic has really reached the East, the Kurds and all of Turkey. There is also the refusal to give up local authority. These are the consequences of the rebellions in this period, and they led to conflict and suppression. The conclusion that must be

drawn from this is not that the existence of problems should be denied but that the correct solution must be found for them. And the correct solution is that democratisation which, while not much in evidence between the two world wars, has been moving forward at a great rate since the Second World War. In this sense, Turkey's great problem is her inability to wage a successful war for democracy and to develop democratic standards. The reason why, despite many developments, both capitalist and socialist authoritarian and totalitarian regimes have collapsed is that they were structures out of keeping with this development. In our day all rigid systems are experiencing a major collapse and transformation in their superstructures and moving towards a democratic evolution. All national, cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic and indeed regional problems are being solved by granting and applying the broadest democratic standards. Every day we see examples of this all over the world. From Indonesia to the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans, Africa and South America the democratic method is looked to for the solution of all general social problems which have various characteristics. It is useful to dwell further on a few aspects of the matter. The first of these is the principle of national self-determination. This principle was applied mainly in the nineteenth century and the greater part of the twentieth century. It was based on the idea of setting up a nation state. The ideology it subscribed to was nationalism. The method it employed was mainly armed struggle and national wars of liberation. It was seen that it had a limited application, but led to great bloodshed and its extreme nationalism engendered long-lasting enmities. This approach which kept the world in a state of tension is still influential, is one whose unhealthy aspects have largely come to light in our day. The struggle that is currently going on in the Balkans clearly shows what a diseased approach this is. The reasons for this are of course its failure to grasp social reality, its narrowly nationalistic approach, and its attempt to find a solution by forcing society and a land where different peoples are intermingled. Naturally this has consequences that amount to savagery. There are many examples of this in history. Many a group or nation choosing to follow this path has, even where triumphant, failed to shed its backwardness and indeed failed to rid itself of many problems born of this inheritance. Because of the approach adopted, the national problem has given rise to even bigger problems every time an attempt was made to solve it. An example of this in history is the religious and sectarian wars in the Middle Ages, the effects of which can still be seen from time to time. Even though the nationalist approach emerged claiming to be a solution to the problems caused by the religious approach, it failed to refrain from following the same methods and made things still more difficult. Although there might be differences between old religious ideologies and the extreme nationalism and its various right and left-wing forms that followed, they are in fact movements that are quite similar and have influenced each other. By the time the twentieth century was reached they had shown that they were evenly matched in terms of bloodshed and savagery. The general democratic theory and practice has been highly successful in dealing with problems created by both extreme religious and extreme nationalist approaches, and countries and societies employing them have triumphed.

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, victory belongs to a democracy that is becoming increasingly mature. Indeed the societies that employ this system with conviction and in a controlled knowledgeable manner are the most advanced societies in the world. Their states are the states whose power is acknowledged in the world. This is clear when one looks at the way the US and Great Britain lead and shape the world.

The power of the democratic system undoubtedly rests above all on its scientific grasp of social reality, its ability to provide correct definitions for the moral and philosophical levels and the substructures below these, and the political and legal levels, and to offer a solution which, without employing labels like “progressive” and “regressive” answers the needs of the social forces of the time and their demand for equality and freedom. There is neither denial nor an attempt to bring about a utopia by force. There is no attempt to impose the beliefs and goals, the utopias of a century ago or a century hence. As it presents solutions both in principle and in practice and proves its ability to solve problems, the democratic level of society becomes its level of solution. By forcing its state and its moral values to become democratic it demonstrates that it has a rich variety of solutions at its disposal. What is very important here is the power to offer a practical solution to every problem. What is even more important is that it has the least recourse to violence and that, even when following such a course, it immediately demonstrates its power to initiate a peaceful method.

There are of course historic reasons for all this as well. To put it in very general terms, in both religious wars and wars arising as national and social wars or in revolutions and counter-revolutions, there has been massive bloodshed and there are no major problems left that can be solved through bloodshed or at least there are very few. In general, the path followed by democracy is that of evolution and peace. This is a historical fact. Democracy moves forward on the legacy of suffering left over from the recent and distant past. Its claim is that there have been enough revolutions and counter-revolutions and it is interested in a method that offers more solutions and offers more development and could be termed more civilised, and it is interested in the social, political and philosophical standards associated with this. This is the claim of democracy, especially as it has become mature in the twentieth century, and it has definitely been verified. The number and magnitude of the problems brought about by scientific-technological development is of course also an important factor. If we view each problem as a revolution and an instance of violence, if we bear in mind that this technology has the power to wipe mankind off the face of the earth, if we consider in particular the developments in nuclear technology and all the other weapons, this violence or the old concepts of revolution and counter-revolution have the potential to spell the end of not just mankind but the entire planet.

This scientific-technological development has undoubtedly also played an important role in the development of democracy. Here the positive aspect is more dominant. Every ideology and mode of belief can, if true, implement itself by using the resources of technology and above all those of the media without having to resort to violence.

In other words, violence has become unnecessary. In fact things have got to the point where violence cannot be afforded. The rich variety of institutions and practices the democratic system offers is built on this social and scientific-technological development, and whatever problem it tackles, it offers a certain solution. It itself is the solution. To go through the examples, the solution to religious wars is secularism. Here the standard and the implementation involve taking the approach that everyone is free to follow their religious beliefs and democratic criteria will apply to all of them. Democracy offers definite freedom of belief and this is the antidote to religious wars. Again the same applies to the fields of thought and ideology. There is freedom of thought and conviction. It is allowed to work as one wants and implement one's beliefs as long as one does not infringe the rights of others in this respect. This also applies to political ideas and their expression in the form of parties. As long as it adheres to the democratic system and its state structure, every party can offer a solution without resorting to violence. There is no question here of either imposing a religion by force or breaking and shattering the structure of the state. Religion, thought and the parties based on them know to meet the standards of the democratic system of the state because they are based on them. If they don't know how to do this, then democracy gets the right to defend itself. It is clear here that regardless of the social group they are based on (which might be a nation or an ethnic or religious group), beliefs, ideas and the parties through which they are expressed cannot, in the name of these beliefs and ideas, force the limits on which the state is based. There is no need for this, because it will render the problem they claim to be solving even worse. Consequently, there is no need for it, and, in any case, there are solutions within the system. These are the democratic rights of those groups. They are their freedoms of belief and thought. They are the parties. They are all types of coalitions. In the area of language and culture, the democratic solution is even more striking. This is the area where the greatest successes have been achieved. Because the intermingling of language and culture, these values that many national groups have assimilated together for centuries, do not want to separate and get weak and monotonous, but prefer to stay together to get enriched and achieve variety, strength and life. And the school and laboratory for this is democracy and its implementation with conviction. Democracy is almost a garden of language and culture. The most developed and powerful principles of our day once again express this clearly. All European countries and North America are clear proofs of it. The attempt to suppress new religious, linguistic, cultural, intellectual and political developments during past centuries was the cause of all major wars, and resistance against suppression gave to wars which could be seen as understandable. Particularly in European countries this experience led to the development of a determined democracy in the wake of all these wars and led to the supremacy of the West. Western civilisation can, in this sense, be termed democratic civilisation. The democratic system is at least as important as scientific and technological superiority. Feeding off each other, they both became strong and achieved the status of world civilisation.

Many other regions in the world remained backward and, in accompanying development, their political systems remained undemocratic. The Middle East is one of the most important of these regions. The religious wars it has experienced from the Middle Ages to the present have given society its dominant shape, and its being the birthplace of three major religions has led to its experiencing these contradictions in a major way. The religions lost the progressive aspects they had in their early stages and, as well as proving an obstacle to a scientific approach, failed to develop democratic standards and a democratic tradition. Increasing feudalism created an even more conservative environment and even the democratic elements that are characteristic of tribalism were eroded and a suitable basis was created for all kinds of democratic rule. Religious and sectarian wars did not even lead to a reform to the extent that was achieved in the West. Parochialism increased and this virtually put an end to the struggle of individuals and society for democracy. In particular thought and political freedom were almost forgotten.

Although the Republic of Turkey, founded in a revolutionary manner on the basis of national liberation on the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, was the first and most important move in this context, it failed to display a powerful trend towards democracy because of the internal rebellions and foreign threats during its initial years, and it achieved a limited development in the areas of thought and new social structures. Until the 1950s there was only a move ment from the autocratic style of government to a limited oligarchy under the influence of worldwide democratic developments. The coup of 27 May, the struggle between the right and the left in the 1970s, the coups of 12 March and 12 September followed. However, again with democracy achieving world-wide domination, it became necessary to take on the character of a Democratic Republic both for this reason and in the face of intense internal conflicts and socio-economic development. All indications show that the Republic is undergoing rapid democratisation in both its social standards and its ideological values, and it has arrived at a stage where this will no longer be prevented in any way.

With this long introduction we have tried to establish a framework as to how all problems should henceforth be solved under the democratic system. We have to concentrate in detail on how all problems pertaining to social groups, including the religious problem and the Kurdish problem, which gives rise to the greatest fears, can be solved within this framework. If problems have grown this is not only because the system has not established this framework but also because those with problems needing a solution have not put such a framework on their agenda. It would have been possible in the 1990s to reach this framework which should have been put in place in the 1960s and 1970s and represented in a consistent way. To try not to miss such an opportunity again in the 2000s and to make use of it should almost be the destiny of all democratic forces after the great experience they have been through. It is clear that the trial of the PKK and myself will play a most important role in this respect. Before entering into the subject of the general democratic system and the problems regarding its implementation in Turkey, in order to render these judgements easier to understand it

would be useful to provide a summary of the European experience involving a great deal of putting things into practice. I consider it important to quote many passages from Leslie Lipson's book *Democratic Civilisation*, which I have concentrated on before in my defence, and which, despite having been published in the 1960s, I feel is still relevant as far as Turkey is concerned. This study is not only scientific, but its almost triumphal vindication in our day makes it even more valuable. The example I have chosen is multi-sectarian, multi-lingual, multi-cultural Switzerland which also forms the core of Europe. This is the historic lesson they have derived from centuries of sectarian struggle: "When they were mutually exhausted, when none of the parties managed to eliminate its opponent, and when they realised that if they did not reunite, their confederation would fall apart, the Swiss realised the value of tolerance. Instead of killing and getting killed, they agreed to live and let live. Thus the tolerance of variety became the foundation of unity and democracy developed as an agreement concerning the mutual co-existence of between different entities." The development regarding the linguistic divisions in Switzerland and the way in which this became the strength of the union is even more striking.

"Thus linguistic differences are added to a society already fragmented through the divisions within Christianity. It can be said in favour of the German majority — and they are a substantial majority — that they displayed an intelligent RESPECT towards the sensibilities of the citizens and made many important CONCESSIONS in the area of language. In the Constitution of 1848 French, Italian and German are recognised as national languages with equal validity for purposes of official use. However, the Swiss went even further. In the canton of Grison in the mountainous region in the southeast of the country lives a minority of some fifty thousand people who speak Romansch, a language which could roughly be described as a sort of Germanised Italian. This group wanted to raise their language from the status of a dialect to that of independent language and thus to be recognised as the fourth official language. In a referendum in 1938 this was accepted by a majority of ten to one. This is a striking example of the respect displayed by the majority towards the sensibilities of a minority." It is then said:

"In contemporary Switzerland the problem of uniting a linguistically fragmented society and then governing it democratically may be deemed to have been solved. However, this should not be taken to mean that being multi-lingual does not entail any difficulties or complexities. On the contrary, I wish to say that in Switzerland the advantages of variety balance and indeed exceed its disadvantages. The Swiss have contributed to the ideals of democracy by using democratic techniques and granting each social group the right to determine its own future. It is necessary to ponder a little the principles and practices that led to this outcome. First of all, the Swiss force themselves to learn at least a second language. It is compulsory to learn German in French, Italian and Romansch-speaking areas and a Romance language in German-speaking areas. A well-educated Swiss speaks at least three languages.

“This linguistic variety establishes a special relation both between the Swiss and neighbouring countries and among the Swiss themselves. Through the languages they speak they share in the three great European cultures based on French, German and Italian. It is extremely natural that Italian Switzerland should feel a certain attachment to Italy, French Switzerland should hanker after Paris, and German Switzerland should have affinities with Germany and Austria. Consequently, the centrifugal effects of language bring the Swiss closer to their neighbours and prevent parochialism and isolation. Of all the nations in Europe the Swiss are the most European. At the same time, however, they are Swiss. And they are so in the most patriotic way. They are proud of their political independence from their neighbours and thankful for the peace and prosperity they enjoy. Swiss from all groups need the others in order to protect their identity. They have managed to turn their difference into a way of strengthening one another.

“The mutual effects of these contrasts are displayed in striking ways. It is impossible to travel in Switzerland without becoming aware of the richness born of the linguistic variety. Compared to other countries, this is a small country with a small population. It is not, however, a country with a monotonous standards and limited characteristics.

“The roots of the Swiss state, the success in creating a quite harmonious democracy despite independence and sharp differences, represents a political victory. When one looks at the condition of the Swiss, the important differences within the country and the pressures from without, it appears miraculous that they were able to create Switzerland, stay united and evolve as a democracy. Furthermore, as their country is an exception to many a generalisation, it presents an extraordinary subject of study to political scientists. Switzerland does not just confirm the rule, it amends universally held beliefs.

“In conclusion, the experience of the Swiss in the field of language and culture can be summed up by a paradox. Linguistic variety, rather than weakening their union, has strengthened it, and their tolerance of this variety is both the cause and the outcome of their democracy.” (Democratic Civilisation, pp. 125–128)

These examples offer a striking demonstration of the way linguistic and cultural differences are strengthened in a state of independence under democracy and end up being both its cause and outcome. There are doubtless many lessons to be drawn in terms of Turkey, too, becoming a mosaic of languages and cultures. The lessons to be drawn are striking indeed when one bears in mind that the Kurdish problem can ultimately be reduced to a problem of language and culture.

Let me quote another passage, this time concerning the meaning of a democratic constitution. This, too, is a subject that has a current relevance for Turkey.

“The first precondition for a democratic constitution is that everyone subject to the state should be equal as citizens and have an equal share in controlling the election of officials. What this means is that a democratic constitution will not distinguish between citizens and subjects, treating one as first and the other as second-class citizens. Within the context of fundamental rights and responsibilities, it will not distinguish between citizens on the basis of race, faith, language, sex, family or wealth. In a democracy

everyone will be equal as regards these fundamental rights. The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that perhaps who are knowingly excluded or relegated to a secondary level by a constitution cannot be represented by it. To the extent such a group exists, the constitution is not democratic. If such groups oppose the constitution and refuse to be bound by it, they will be morally and politically in the right because the constitution has rejected them. Because of this, democracy cannot be implemented, through a constitution or any other means, among groups which reject each other's natural human existence or the common character they share. A democratic constitution must first off all contain a unity accepted by everyone." (Democratic Civilisation, p.348)

Another example is provided by Britain. It has the reputation of having the best applied constitution in the world. It is also the foremost country for solving problems within democracy without resorting to violence. It is striking how this state of affairs was arrived at.

"Twentieth-century Britons can have their small arguments in security, because the English and the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish, Protestants and Catholics, aristocrats and commoners have committed their acts of genocide and exploitation and murder in former times and are done with them. The peace of today is the fruit of the crises of yesterday."

It is clear here what a perfect constitutional democracy they have managed to extract from the multi-faceted quarrels of the century. Their greatest virtue is the creation of a democratic system. The language of democracy is evolution and the British are experts at this.

Another important passage concerns the re-examination of principles and programmes after their implementation in this period.

"But, if principles are, as is natural, established before programmes, it is a fact that they have to be looked at again after programmes are developed. Ideals might and should be used to start a movement. However, as experience broadens, it might be necessary to re-formulate ideals in the light of what is possible. Consequently, there must be a constant exchange between political implementation and the philosophy behind it. Because constantly applied programmes change the population, they have an effect on society and politics. Goals which were exciting for grandfathers become meaningless nursery rhymes for their grandchildren. It is necessary to tailor abstract ideals to changing specific conditions."

This makes it very clear how, in democracies, in specific circumstances or where principles are not compatible with practice, political organisations must adapt their principles and programmes and the state must adapt its constitution. It is also clear that principles and programmes which remain incompatible with practice for a long time can have no value. What must be gathered from the long passages quoted is that, in the words of a saying that has become famous in Turkey, "In democracies solutions are endless". However, it is clear that practice has not altogether kept up with this saying. When we put the question of what stage we are at in the process of



democratisation and what problems we are faced with on the agenda with conviction and determination, it will be seen that we have the opportunity for a great solution.

It is clear that European countries on the whole solved their most important national, linguistic and religious problems at the start of the twentieth century and set up their present strong democracies, and that this regime is mainly responsible for their extensive development and superiority. Europeanisation in this sense was a goal in the first years of the Republic. It is clear that Atatürk's desire "to reach and even exceed the level of contemporary civilisation" and his saying "We set up the Republic; you will take it further" can become realities only through the democratisation of the Republic. The Republic itself, the Fethi Okyar cabinet with liberal leanings in the first years of the Republic, the Free Party experiment are expressions of Atatürk's yearning for democracy. It is clear from his having seen two major forms of government of his day, the Nazi totalitarianism of Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet dictatorship, and said, "These systems shall collapse", that the superiority of democracy was perceived even in those days, but could not be put into practice. The flag of democracy waved by the Democratic Party after the Second World War was for show only and it failed to achieve anything more than leading to an oligarchy. Since the fifties Turkey has constantly spoken of a western-style democracy, but she has not applied it. This has brought about heavy conflicts between the right and the left and three major military coups. The fact that the political environment is constantly filled with this violence and is tense as a result proves that democracy has not developed. The fact that the effects of this are still being experienced today is the most relevant subject of our time.

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As for the regions with a concentration of Kurds, it is clear, that whatever one calls it, a rebellion and great suffering and violence are being experienced in these areas and that there are serious economic and social problems behind this. Many officials and government institutions frequently state this verbally and write it into their reports. However, it is clear that a democratic upsurge is also taking place. More than twenty parties representing every shade of opinion and social group have entered the last elections and everyone could vote. This is no small development from the point of view of democratisation. It is equally clear that democracy is not compatible with violence and only the peaceful solution of all problems that lead to violence is compatible with democracy. It is therefore the case that the stage we are at and both the religious and ethno-cultural problems that underlie it demonstrate that we are face to face with democratisation, and that progress is synonymous with the solving of these problems by democratic means. It is important to see it very clearly that, in the course of the two hundred years since the toppling of Selim III at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the conclusion of the "Treaty of Agreement" with leading figures, that Turkey has lived through every kind of violence, revolution, counter-revolution and coup, and that it is now clear that violence is not a solution but an obstacle which indeed repeats itself to excess.

I believe this is the most fundamental subject on which there is a consensus amongst all groups in Turkey. No one believes problems can be solved through violence. This is proven also by the historic stage we are going through, which appears to have drawn its greatest lesson from history and, that despite its great capacity for violence, uses this capacity to direct a creative contemporary democracy instead, and has clearly been run by National Security Council concepts since the mid 1990s. The army does not stage a coup. The army is more sensitive than the most seemingly democratic parties. It bears in mind standards of democracy. In our day, when the relationship between the army and democracy is under study, the fact that the army has taken upon itself to be the protector of democratic norms, at a time when everyone wants more democracy for themselves, is of course connected with the security of the country. However, the army's ability to perceive that even this security for which it is responsible is connected with democracy, is a high-minded approach worthy of respect. In this respect, too, this is an historic stage in democracy. It is clear that a solution is being looked for on the basis that in a democracy solutions are endless. If this had not been comprehended, there would have been a coup and nothing and no one would have been able to stop it. Today the army is not a threat to democracy, but on the contrary a force that guarantees that democracy will move on to the next stage in a healthy manner and continue working. Why is this so? It is so because there is no solution left to the problems other than words and action closely connected with the essence of democracy. It is so because violence can no longer solve problems but instead makes them worse, and solutions must henceforth come from the internal creativity of the democratic system. It is so because democracy has stopped being simply a need for Turkey and become inescapable. I feel the need to ask that it should be recalled as a historical fact that, since 1996, I have approved of this role played by the army with care, and said even back then that we had no option but to help them, and that I have increasingly sought a solution in this direction by instigating unilateral but unsuccessful attempts at a cease-fire.

The fact that more or less all other important political, economic and civilian institutions are, even if they do not explicitly say so, engaged in a great search for democracy, and there is no group which does not want a meaningful democracy, also serves to demonstrate the historic character of this epoch. It is possible to see this in many reports, conferences, discussion panels. The virtual bombardment in this respect in many media organisations also shows this is a historic period and its historic nature lies in its democratic nature. However, it is also the case that from the uppermost levels of government to ordinary citizens everyone is agreed that what is being implemented is not real democracy. Of the heads of fundamental state institutions, those of the Constitutional Court and the State Council nowadays speak of the need to remove the obstacles — starting with the bans against language, thought and political parties — in the way of democratic standards in the speeches they give on the anniversary of the founding of these institutions. There are even problems with swearing-in in Parliament. The position of the fundamental institutions of the state with respect to democracy

demonstrate the sensitivity and historic importance of the epoch. The following passages are important as a summary of experiences elsewhere in the world which show how democracy can provide a solution to conflicts which have reached such a scale:

“However, conflict has the nature of imposing certain limits. If it is not controlled, it can be devastating enough to destroy itself. Unless we manage to limit our impulse to destroy, we cannot live as civilised beings. Consequently, the need arises to institutionalise our conflicts and to find methodical assurances for them. Furthermore, while discussing what ideals we have to reach in the future, we have to conduct our present lives within an orderly framework. Just as the conflicts of today will lead to the ORDER that will exist tomorrow, the present ORDER is the outcome of conflicts in the past. For society to remain in existence, its administration must be organised in a way that comprehends citizens, rules, an administrative apparatus, rights and persons with authority. In other words, there must be a state. However, again for this society to adapt to change and evolve, political discussion must, within the state, be able to find a way of responding to change and thereby bringing reality closer to ideals. Institutions which work well and continue to exist are those which establish a balance between being open to changes and protecting themselves. If this balance is not established, the apparatus of administration will find itself in conflict with the forces that evolve within the political process. Consequently, there is a tension between politics and the state. The dynamic qualities of politics push against the static nature of the state. Politics has the nature of being fluid. It is like a sea where forces that are difficult to govern and check are tossing about. In contrast, the state has a certain structure. It seeks unity and strength; its standards are law and order and authority. Just as the sea eternally batters the land, the waves of politics keep battering the state. Their point of contact is the government. This meeting is like a metaphysical riddle about an irresistible force lifting an immovable rock. Indeed, this is the sort of thing that happens in moments of political uprising such as a revolution. Consequently, a system needs to be established that will remove a TENSION of this kind. This system is DEMOCRACY. Among forms of government democracy is UNIQUE in its nature and its method of approaching these problems. From the point of view its goals it is preventive to some extent. It prevents conflicts between interests, groups and individuals from becoming destructive. However, to a larger extent, it is CONSTRUCTIVE. By bringing together the political energies of different groups it tries to serve the public good. DEMOCRACY tries to establish a relationship in which politics can be creative and the state can be sensitive. The goal of democracy is to render the rock moveable and the force resistible.” (Democratic Civilisation, p.235)

The point I really wish to emphasise here is that democracy acts as a real medicine in periods when the political environment is tense and is shaken from time to time by uprisings and rebellions. I wish to emphasise that, as well as preventing extreme moves on the parts of interests, democracy allows their justified aspects to be realised through state institutions. I wish to emphasise that it transcends tension and conflict with a wonderful balance. That it has ideal governments which, thanks to the suitability of

democratic state institutions for such a purpose, can offer a solution without allowing different kinds of politics and the forces behind these to come into conflict. Here every problem is balanced through a state, i.e. a government, that has been rendered sensitive through democracy, without resorting to violence, and indeed problems are made to serve the public good in the best possible way. Tensions and the forces and conflicts behind these, which lead to devastation and massacres under other regimes, are rendered beneficial to all under democracy. This is where we see the immense creativity of democracy. This also shows where the superiority of western societies really comes from. Those who cannot transform their destructive energy into constructiveness — and what will achieve such a transformation is democratic standards — will of course lose in a big way, and those who can do so will win. Turkey's losses have been enormous during the last half century because of her inability to transform the negative aspects of political tension and violence and the energy contained therein into something beneficial to individuals and groups. As well as losing a generation, resources of unlimited material and moral value have been lost. There has been infinite suffering. It is impossible not to regret this in a big way when one considers all that could have been won instead if the democratic system had been agreed on in the conviction that it could be managed and everyone had abided by its requirements. Especially the experiences of the last forty years indicate that the democratic epoch Turkey is in must not only be won in the most successful way possible but that it is also the one indispensable solution.

I have tried to sum up the character of the Turkish Republic, the historical conditions of its emergence and the national and social realities within it, I have given a brief history of its development, and even compared it to the international democratic system in order to establish a framework for this trial and the Kurdish — or, if you prefer to call it that, south-eastern or terror — problem. The joint struggle of the foundation period is transformed into a bitter problem when uprisings and the social reasons behind them prevent a free union from coming about. Every uprising makes the problem worse. Together with the historical reasons behind it, it is transformed into a reality that burns everyone who approaches it, into a wounded, extremely painful, tragic reality. Although the nations and various of groups in countries all over the world which experienced similar problems and were indeed at each other's throats for centuries attained a wonderful power to solve their problems and brought about fruitful unions in the century of the Republic (Switzerland has been cited as a striking example), turning their languages and religions into the foundations of their independence and democracy and doing so despite the separatist forces surrounding them, why wasn't this done here? Why, despite a common history and religion and indeed linguistic and cultural affinities, the waging of the war of liberation and the setting up of the Republic together, could rebellions not be prevented? Why was this aspect not developed, why were we unable to endow the democratic republic, which must be understood as government by the people, with the power to solve this problem? More importantly, how are we going to endow it with this power? In the light of the

experience of other nations in the world it is possible to see that the problem is not only capable of a solution but is accompanied by nearly ideal conditions. The fact of intermingling, a common country, cultural affinities born of centuries of natural assimilation in language and religion, and, most important of all, having continuously lived under the umbrella of the same state, show how developed the objective conditions are for a democratic solution. It is also a fact that, under the existing conflicts, the two sides are of a type that is the closest to a union by world standards. Here union is as suited to the objective foundation as separatism is incompatible with it. I went into the grounds for this in the relevant sections. However, in essence both, on the one hand, the opposition to the Republic of the traditional Kurdish ruling class, the feeling of the dynasties and tribal leaders long accustomed to doing as they please that the new order was not compatible with their interests, and their ability to cause a people, whom they had tied to themselves with feudal tribal and religious ties over the centuries, to rebel; and, on the other hand, the inability of the Republic to establish its democratic foundations for this reason have undoubtedly led conflicts moving in the direction of destructiveness and separatism. Instead of blaming the parties, I am trying to assess them scientifically here. I am saying that, although the foundations were promising, soon the natural anxiety of one side to protect the Republic, and the struggle of the other side to protect its interests developed over centuries, made it difficult for them to cross the bridge in a friendly, brotherly manner, and the problem got worse. Extreme violence, fear, suffering and estrangement came about. It was as if henceforth the Republic would suppress and deny, and the Kurds would say, "I exist, but I am running away, I am rebelling". This is how the tragedy and the bitter division came about. In fact this should not have happened. As natural assimilation had brought Kurds and Turks so close over the centuries, there was no need for denial and the use of force. Furthermore, the acceptance of Turkish as the official language and its development were only natural. The Turks were at the root of the transformation of Turkey into a nation, and so no one could object to this, it was natural. As they were fundamental founding element of the state, it could not have been otherwise. This was the historic meaning of everyone participating in this transformation into a nation and Atatürk saying, "Happy is the one who can say, I am a Turk". It was first of all Atatürk who said this about the Turks whom the Ottomans had labelled "Turks incapable of comprehension". Just as individuals from different origins can use the English they speak in common to say, "I am an American" and indeed even in a country like Switzerland, which has four languages and cultures, they can say, "I am Swiss", there is nothing strange about speaking of the existence of a single national identity in which all share in Turkey. National unity is not being questioned here and it must not be questioned. The same is true to a greater extent of the unity of the country and the state. Although these facts are evident, their meaning from the point of view of sociology and political science is not examined in depth, and they are instead used for a chauvinistic and extreme nationalism and turned into a problem. Although Atatürkist nationalism is not a nationalism of race or origins and is based on a national culture

that has evolved through history, deviation from this nationalism prepares the ground for a nationalism opposed to it. When these nationalist approaches, which were not much in evidence during the period of the founding of the Republic, combined with the dominant aspects of Kurdish society, they got deeper. It was not thought to opt for a European-style democratic acceptance and both to prevent linguistic, cultural, religious and ethnic differences from developing into conflicts and to turn them into forces serving the common good in the democratic cauldron. Indeed, democracy was pushed entirely to one side, and the class differences that grew after the fifties led to an oligarchic structure that was a barrier to democracy. When the democratic system was not given a chance to solve conflicts of class, language, culture and even religion which were to get steadily worse, the problems led to renewed fighting in the seventies. Although a democratic solution should easily have been found for the Kurdish problem together with other problems, both because of its historic foundations and because of the world-wide conflicts of the period in question, it turned into a powder keg in the hands of the young people of the day. Before we got to know the state, society and history, we found ourselves in the midst of a rebellion in the name of the PKK because of our dogmatic, ideological approach and our utopian politics. The problem which had been lying dormant for years burst into life again and turned into a rebellion. No kind of violence can get this far unless it has a social basis. Everyone knows that terrorism by individuals can go only so far. In any case, there is no act of violence which does not have a social significance. Violence without a purpose is the most dangerous kind of violence, and consequently it is a crime. However, it is clear that a conflict which has long ago moved beyond being a war, which at times has costs hundreds of lives on a single day, and which has affected millions for such a long time can only result from a problem with deep historical and social roots. The PKK can at most have acted as a fuse. What I am trying to show here is not only the way in which the problem emerged but also how it was solved elsewhere in the world and the form it has taken in Turkey under the influence of the PKK under my leadership. Because of their historical importance, I had to deal in detail with aspects not alluded to at all by the respected prosecutors in their indictment. From a legal point of view, the status of the PKK is clear, but if we do not underline the historical and social dimensions of the problem and compare it with problems elsewhere in the world to which a solution has been found, this trial will have been wasted. A historic trial should lead to a historic solution. This is what Turkey passionately demands from us. This time round, will the Republic demonstrate its power to find a democratic solution and create such a solution? This is the question everyone is asking. Will this last rebellion be solved by a historic democratic conciliation and democratic creativity — as I believe it will- and end up being indeed the very last rebellion? This is what they are asking.

Even if it involves repetition and involves going into things at length, it is as important to compare the problem to similar problems elsewhere in the world as it is to describe its links with history and society. If I have bravely dealt with these things in this trial, it is because this is made necessary by this Republic and its developing

character and necessity for us to recognise this in the right way and consequently get reconciled. It is also because I wanted to show that, scientifically, we neither have nor need another option. From this point onwards I shall try to answer the following questions. Although it is the fundamental charge in the indictment, and although it is in the programme of the PKK and mentioned in many declarations I have made, is a separate state necessary? Is it possible? Is this confirmed by words and actions? What has life proven? Is union by force or separatism still an option? Can they offer a solution? And if not, will there be a historic opportunity this time round for a democratic solution based on a common country and a common state?

## **The Kurdish Problem Involves not Separation but a Democratic Union with the Republic**

The history of the Kurdish problem which we have attempted to summarise and the social reality it is based on, show that as far as both the common land and the state built on it are concerned, that although the Turks have done the leading, the Kurds have been their most brotherly followers. Those who rebelled did so more out of local interests than to found a separate state and were unable to go beyond the narrow framework of families and tribal authority pertaining to the ruling elite. From the start too, at least one group has been conciliatory. Even if Kurdish nationalism has ultimately made a claim to separatism, in practice it has never had the intention, power or preparation to bring this about. In this sense, it has from the start condemned itself to being unable to find a solution. It seems to pursue separatism, but in the end it is the people who suffer when the state takes action. And this gives rise to a damaged, diseased social structure. This in turn brings suspicion, fear, anxiety, ignorance and an increasing socio-economic backwardness with it. And as the state gets to see the Kurds as a people in a constant state of rebellion, going into exile becomes a feature of this society. It is as if everyone strives to get out of the region. The psychology of permanent rebellion is an expression of this social reality. A state cannot arise out of such a social structure. Neither its intellectual level, nor its geographical position, nor its economic state will permit it. When the relationship between the Kurds and the state is looked at in a scientific way, it will be seen that not only democratic union is the best solution but it is the one that the conditions are most suited to. When we bear in mind several alternatives in this context we will see that:

A- The alternative of a separate state is not a solution either in terms of its concrete foundations or its benefits, and although claims are made for it, of all alternatives, it has the least practical value. Even if it were to come into existence, it would not be recognised by any of its neighbours and would not be recognised in the international arena. Let us put that to one side. In order to remain in existence, such a state would need an economy, a language, social unity and defence, and it is obvious that it lacks

the foundations to remain in existence for even one day. If, despite full outside support, even autonomy is proving impossible for the Kurds in Northern Iraq, this is also partly due to their internal social structure. In this sense, the alternative of a separate state cannot be anything more than an ideological slogan for the Kurds. In the programme of the PKK, too, it is referred to as a matter of ideology, but what practice and history have shown is the reality of union. However, the vital question is what sort of union this should be.

B- Alternatives such as a federation and autonomy can be implemented to some extent. Historically, the feudal and tribal structure in Kurdish areas can provide a basis for these. What is experienced in states where there is no democracy and what was formerly experienced under feudalism is mainly an ethnic and tribal autonomy. This not only has no national character but is valid only within a narrow tribal framework. Even in our day the Behdinan-Soran distinction among Southern Kurds and autonomous structures based on this are not fully developed. Once again, the main reason is the power of feudalism. What the Kurds experienced in the Ottoman period, too, was pockets of intense feudal autonomy. Even rebellions always came into being when these pockets were threatened. In this sense, it is difficult to view these uprisings as movements based on the free will of the population. Their social structure and outlook would not have permitted their reaching such a state. Dynastic ideologies and tribal interests take precedence over everything. In this sense, because even in our day, autonomy and the concept of federation which is now being discussed in this context would be dependent on a backward social structure, they would not really allow for the development of democratic values. These would do more to strengthen feudal and tribal remnants. The experience of the Southern Kurds largely proves this. Furthermore, these are the forms most conducive to collaborationism and being a tool in the hands of whoever wants to use it the most and has the power to do so. Because they have not evolved democratically, they are quite open to both traditional types of rebellion and destruction. Therefore, although it has been discussed a great deal and tried open, it is best to adopt a quite critical attitude towards this type of solution.

From the point of view of the Kurds in Turkey, the situation presents us with more important differences. As well as the existence of different dialects, the intermingling of Kurds and Turks, and the presence of at least as many Kurds in the west as there are in the east indicate that autonomy is not a practical option. Federation cannot be applied to the millions of Kurds in provinces like Istanbul, Izmir and Adana. This type of population dispersal is found in many examples around the world and indicates that democratic notions regarding language and culture offer a better solution than regional solutions. People of various different ethnic origins are to be found living in close proximity in the same cities and regions, and this is a contemporary indication that the solution lies in the turning of democracy into an institution. In any case, it is possible to derive greater benefits from the development of local administrations than those expected from autonomy. The demographic distribution of Kurdish and Turkish populations is suitable neither for separation nor for federation but for solutions that



will lead to the strengthening of their union by means of the removal of the obstacles in the way of equality and freedom through the development of democracy into an institution. From centuries of natural assimilation to the mutual daily functioning of the economic structure and social fluidity, everything constantly narrows the material basis of autonomy even further.

C- The third alternative is the democratic solution. The failure to discuss the theoretical and practical aspects of this approach, which has provided solutions to very important problems all over the world, and to put it on the agenda in Turkey until now is not only unfortunate but also an outcome of the failure of democracy to develop in a consistent and serious way. In fact it would have been possible to find the ideal approach to the Kurdish problem in the theory of democracy and its rich variety of practical approaches, and develop nearly ideal solutions. It is clear that there was a historical basis for this during the period of the founding of the Republic, and Atatürk's reply at the Izmit press conference clearly indicates that the solution must be sought in this direction. Before going into these matters it is necessary to examine this style further. For example in Switzerland, a country we have looked at, geographies, cultures, languages and religions which are intermingled can be seen finding the strongest democratic solution when a long period of conflict ends with their seeing they have a mutual interest in union. The country thus ends up developing the strongest democracy in Europe. This simultaneously makes for a powerful independence. As well as allowing them to see the damage caused by the internal and external forces working to break them up, their experience enables them to see the great benefits to be derived from union. If it wanted, each part could join with its language, culture and geography the main part, i.e. Germany, France or Italy; but they know very well that if they were to do this, they would be losing both their identity and their affluence and what they would be gaining would in no way be equal to what is granted to each of them by Switzerland. This is something we can see in many countries, including even places where apartheid is practised. In Belgium, Canada, the Republics of South America, New Zealand and even in the USA, despite regional, cultural, religious and linguistic differences, it is well known that the common good is based on a strong democratic state structure. Indeed they have achieved development by applying the principle that variety makes for power and wealth. Undoubtedly, as well as the historical experience of conflict, democratic struggle has played a role in this. Those who cannot succeed in this lose in a big way. In the contemporary world this has emerged as the successful solution, and the extreme point to which the blood-soaked alternative can lead has been demonstrated most recently in Kosovo.

What is saddest from the point of view of Turkey is the question of why we could not learn a lesson from the policies applied in the world, and why, although a nearly ideal solution was possible, we did not seize the opportunity. As happened with many problems, we always behaved as if rebellion and suppression were the only way. It is necessary to go into this in some detail with respect to the Kurdish problem:

## **Separatism and rebellion by one side and suppression and denial by the other!**

Even leaving aside the heavy and tragic losses these two frequently tried approaches have caused, they have no power to offer a solution and have presented society with major problems. When methods are not contemporary and therefore capable of offering a solution, this is the point where one ends up — the point where there is no solution. Although we say this is not an inevitable fate and in democracies solutions are truly endless, our inability to apply this in practice renders us all responsible before history. No problem can be presented correctly by blaming one person, one group, one side. By blaming a problem with such complex historical, geographical, cultural, social and international dimensions almost solely on my person everyone can at best hide their guilt, have an easy escape and live to fight another day. In Turkey everyone from the very top to the very bottom now follows this fashion. Everyone might be able to feed their emotions and their daily interests by blaming everything on me. However, this won't make a contribution to history or towards solving the problem and will not do anything other than create an obstacle.

Consequently, it would be more correct from a moral and political point of view for everyone, regardless of their past approach, to assume their responsibilities and approach the matter with the intention of finding a scientific solution for it, to find a solution for a contemporary problem which daily causes suffering and bloodshed, and to make a contribution instead of making accusations. We are living through an historic moment when the democratic solution must come into effect, and its essence is the will of the people. It is sufficient to look at the last elections to see that the democratic solution has gained ground. The success HADEP achieved in local elections despite not having canvassed seriously at grassroots level, the displaying by the Kurdish masses of their intention to be governed by their collective will is a solution offered by democracy that is not inconsiderable if one bears in mind the heavy feudal characteristics of the area. It is an important step along the way. Its value is even greater from the point of view of a democratic solution. If this can happen despite the existing tension and conflicts, when the fighting stops completely, when the obstacles in the way of legal reforms and freedoms referred to by the Constitutional Court and other legal institutions, as well as by prominent statesmen and political party officials, are lifted, there will be a victory for democracy, which will have become consistent and been seen to have the capability of offering a solution. It is clear that Turkey is moving towards such an outcome with all her dynamism, regardless of whether such an outcome is desired or obstacles are put in its way. This is what we derive our belief and assurance from.

Let us go back to the beginning. No one can deny the democratic value of the Republic during the periods of liberation and founding, or deny that the Kurds were perceived as a founding element. Furthermore, Atatürk personally used expressions like

“a type of autonomy” and “regional autonomy” and indicated his intention of finding a solution. However, the rebellions took this off the agenda and later led to a firm banning and denial of the problem. Things were taken to the extent of imposing a ban on the Kurdish language until 1992. It is clear that, as well as not being democracy, this is not consistent with Atatürkism. The Kurdishness that Atatürk objected to is not that Kurdishness which is going to form a union with the Republic in a civilised and eventually democratic way. What he objected to was the rebellion that established links with the sultanate during the early years of the Republic and was under the influence of foreign powers, and would probably have led to the collapse of the Republic and the greatest losses for Turks and Kurds alike. What he objected to was anti-Republicanism. In any case, the number of rebellions of this nature that occurred in western Anatolia was far greater. They were approached in the same way. I believe it is historically important to assess Atatürk’s approaches, these two important aspects, together. I also believe that if Atatürk were alive today, he would take the most appropriate stance, the one that supports a democratic union with the Republic. No one can either view the anxiety to protect the Republic during its most vulnerable period as suppression and denial or refuse to see that the Kurds were an officially accepted voluntary founding element at the start of the Republic. This is what I mean by the two important historical aspects. Furthermore, it was Atatürk himself who openly handed out the duty of taking the Republic further.

In any case, that period was not one when democracy was strong, it was the period of totalitarian regimes. There were not many years between the two world wars. It was more a question of protecting what existed. However, the increasing strength of the democratic movement after the Second World War and the realities of a changing world should have led us to concentrate on a Republic that would be irretrievably committed to solving its problems in a democratic way. When this was not done, in the undemocratic atmosphere of the period beset by conflicts, an attempt was made on the old basis to govern a rebellion by a limited amount of sociological knowledge. Even though under the leadership of the PKK there was talk of a “socialist state”, even though every organisation of the period spoke of its own concept of a state, these were concepts on a merely sectarian level and did not go beyond being utopian. When the PKK partially transcended this by achieving mass support, especially in the 1990s a search began for “free union” or, in other words, democratic union, which I personally tried to give voice to with intense assessments. This was a necessity which life had faced us with. Even if utopias are attractive, success in politics can come only through facing reality, and this was what we belatedly tried to do. Developments during these years were in favour of democracy and they were world-wide. The Soviet Union was falling apart because of a lack of democracy, the entire system was moving towards democracy even if it was only limping, the whole world was changing in this direction. The point the conflict had forced everyone to arrive at in Turkey, too, was the opportunity for a historic democratic solution. The state had seen this. The language ban had been lifted and outlets such as the Kurdish Institute, the Roja Welat newspaper,

the Mesopotamian Culture Association etc. were allowed. The Prime Minister of the period, Demirel made the statement “I recognise the Kurdish identity” in the name of the newly formed coalition government. President Ozal went even further and said even federation could be discussed. Even limiting military operations and a cease-fire were given serious consideration to. Kurdish society was staging the greatest democratic demonstrations in its history. What really should have been done was for both sides to end all fighting and to concentrate on the democratic solution which we have been trying to explain and for which there was now an opportunity even if it was a limited one. Failing to take the measures to render the cease-fire permanent, lack of trust, lack of experience, and the not inconsiderable machinations of outside powers caused this historic process to give way to meaningless fighting which bitterly repeated itself and led to heavy losses. This should not have happened. Personally I always felt the pain of this. However, the ruthless approach adopted by the government of the day is to blame as well. From time to time violence also rose to unlimited and ruthless levels. Killings by persons unknown and evacuations of villages were the process where virtual gang warfare became most intense. This process which should not have been gone through is a lost process. The concept which was voiced in the National Security Council in 1995–1996 for both Turkey and the PKK, the concept which was allowed to reach us by indirect means and which led me to believe the army was taking a new approach was that the PKK should bear in mind the transformation undergone by the state and should respond to it in the way expected. As I understood it, this attempt, to which I tried to respond quickly and in a positive way, was an attempt to look for a solution in the context of western-style democratic development under the control of the army, without questioning the concept of a common land or bringing in the notion of an independent state. I responded to this, if inadequately, by several times declaring a unilateral cease-fire. I tried to inform the organisation and slowly prepare it for the new concept. This is the approach I have had up to this day. The reason I go into these developments in such detail is this: What was important was that, as one of the most important institutions in the country, the army, looked in a new direction to ensure the safety of the Republic and, in a very different way from its previous interventions, reminded everyone, every group and every party, of the standards of legitimacy, democracy and secularism. The response this demanded from the PKK was not just that it should give up the armed struggle but also that it should review its separatist programme, find a solution for the Kurdish problem slowly through democratisation, treading the path that had begun to open up and would open further in this respect. Another important reason for regarding this concept or perspective as a positive development was that it was practical. I must point out that it was these messages, which I believed came from the right source and which I saw opening up channels for themselves day after day, that encouraged me to reach the conclusion that even toppling the state would not achieve anything, that separatism had nothing to offer, and that the best option was to develop the democratic nature of the state.

Briefly, what I have been trying to say is that, after looking at both the initial years of the Republic and an important rebellion in recent history, a rebellion that began nearly a quarter of a century ago and has had the dimensions of a war for the past 15 years, as the principal leader of the said rebellion, the historical conclusion I have arrived at is that the solution for this problem which has got so big, is democratic union with the democratic, secular Republic.

## **The Democratic Union Solution is the Future of Turkey**

A problem which has an important social power base and keeps itself alive through frequent rebellions will, however much it is suppressed, sooner or later erupt through different channels when the time and place are right, if it is not resolved. Suppression will only kill time and perhaps crush the elements active in a particular period. It will not get rid of the problem. Problems which have a serious and historical meaning only disappear when the interests of the power it represents are protected within the system through reforms or this power transcends the system and finds a solution in another system. They stop causing the system constantly to lose strength and turn into a positive source of strength. It is the historical duty of everyone and every institution in Turkey to find a solution to this problem which is regarded as the fundamental problem by both its public, private, political and social opponents and supporters, by nearly everyone and every institution, and seen as the problem that will hold Turkey back until it is solved. And this solution should be found through the scientific approach which we have tried to explain a little and countless examples of which can be found in every society.

The great democratic upsurge that is being experienced in Turkey is an indication that the problem has both emerged and is about to be solved. The worse a problem has got the closer it is to solution. The talking of many governments in recent times of the problem, their inability to solve it and their aggravating it is the main reason for their failure. We can see this in the failure of all political institutions and leaders. Furthermore, important economic and social problems are also obstacles. If they are not solved, obstacles grow and the matter becomes intractable. Many attempts have been made to cut this Gordian knot with a sword, but the very ones wielding the swords have stated that one cannot get anywhere by continuing to use sword. They have admitted that this is all that can be done by the sword, by military means.

The reason I mention these aspects which I cannot refrain from repeating is that a historic solution must emerge from this trial. My repetitions should therefore be excused. I want to demonstrate that otherwise history will not forgive anyone, that increasingly and with conviction the heaviest responsibility is placed on me, that I am ready to do what is necessary, and that I both bear a heavy responsibility for this

rebellion and now in this trial wish to offer my solution, indicating that the time has definitely come for peace.

## Democratic Unity Solution Theses

1 — The Solution will strengthen the state's unity as well as making a common homeland a reality.

The office of the Prosecution in its indictment indicates that based on the programme [of the party] and my speeches, an independent state of Kurdistan was to be established. It is true, when an idea or programme is subjected to the test of time, or wars are waged to see if it is viable, one learns if they can be implemented or not. The world is full of groups whose ideas when faced with the practical needs of [reality] have changed courses. Units that have been kept together by force of arms have dissolved, just as artificially separated units or entities have come together. The great state of the Soviets has dissolved after 70 years, [but] the European Union is coming together [just] as other [voluntary] formations are taking place in the world. I want to say this: separation does not happen by wanting it or by accomplishing it; this is not the way you reach your goal. If unity is beneficial, at the end, it will prevail.

The Turks and the Kurds fought under a National Pact [Misak-i Milli] and accepted it as their national oath. Even if the National Pact is not implemented fully it remains a national oath. This is verifiable by documents. No one can deny this. The regions where the Kurds dominate was recognized as such by notables such as Great Selcuk [ruler] Sancar, and other Ottoman Sultans down to Mustapha Kemal Ataturk. The word Kurdistan can not be a crime. The desire to live free and independent in it should not be construed as dividing it [from the National Pact]. The last part of that indictment ends with a similar sentence. I too believe this is the crux of the problem. If my practice is closely analyzed this will stand out; there are books full of documents to prove my point. The most meaningful freedom even if it is in a place called Kurdistan can only be possible within the borders of Turkey's National Pact. It is not difficult to prove this by scientific evidence as well. A separated Kurdistan is not viable, will be a puppet of another power or tool of the collaborators. The separated Kurdistan will not belong to the people, it will belong to foreigners and collaborators, and that in itself is utopian, and for that reason it is an often repeated game for selfish interests. History proves that selfish interests manipulate the rebellions, but that a heavy price is paid by the people. We see this in our own rebellion. I mean to say this: my own struggle [tells me that], we can only reach our goal within Turkey. I did my best to instill this [spirit] into the PKK [rank and file]. This is not difficult to see. Free union is the goal of all our friends.

A close look at history, society, geography, language, culture [of Turkey] will show [how these peoples] have intermingled with one another. I am not going to dwell on these issues now since I plan to tackle them one by one later. Just as a vast majority of

the Kurds [of National Pact], some 70 % of them live in Turkey [proper] and the others [Kurds] who live in the [Kurdish regions] and Turkmen because they live within the National Pact, are all considered as from Turkey. Those who have a bit of historical knowledge will acknowledge that their separation from one another in the 1920s would have resulted in the loss of their homeland. It would have also meant that the separation of the Turks and the Kurds would have meant that they would have been swallowed up or would have remained small minorities. The role Ataturk played in the formation of this state and our joint actions carried the day. We are all grateful for that. Those who question this will show disrespect to the cause of history. It means we do not recognize ourselves. The common geographies we have make us play a determining and continuing role [in our lives.] The advances in the field of science dictate that we go beyond ethnic differences and form beneficial unions above nations. We who are born on our homeland view the real freedom and liberty in this light. Even if you force it, we will not accept separation. Because, free union is richness, multi-coloured and [offers] strength. Our [party] programme which aimed to protest the forced union [of the Turks and the Kurds] went through changes in the 1990s, for the solution dictated to us that we opt for [voluntary] union. [And] this was natural, a lesson of life, and the [adaptation] to the changes that were taking place in the world. The best form of patriotism in a united state is the way to go in a free union: democratic unity and living on our common homeland. This latest rebellion has taught a lesson to both Kurds and Turks and all the other citizens of Turkey and that it is only through freedom, one can become a knowledgeable patriot. The Kurds more than ever before, want a united state that is free. Freedom is the strongest cement of a united homeland. This rebellion has taught us that. Painful as has been the struggle with many losses, it must also be noted that an historical gain has been made. There is no room for rebellions in a state that is free and defended with knowledge; as it is obvious that an unwavering unity and strong state is only possible then. Constitutional freedom can only have meaning when an individual feels [totally] free. An individual from the East more than ever before can now feel the meaning of Constitutional citizenship. This is the way we understand a free state and patriotism. This is the only way for a state to live and grow strong. Our struggle, which began as it did, with the aim of separation, has taught us the lessons of state unity. A Free united homeland is sacred and should not be questioned.

2 — The Solution will be via political unity, freedom and a democratic republic.

The indictment using the content of my speeches tries to prove that I intended to divide the country. The teachings of history, lessons from other nations, and what we have learned from our own past experiences, show that the most practical way to the solution of the Kurdish conflict is to live side by side under the principles of a democratic republic.

History shows that in the past, people considered the country to be a common state shared by both the Kurds and the Turks. They fought together for the founding of the republic. Even during previous rebellions the conflict was not a demand for separation from Turkey, but was related to the division of the classes. The wealthy, dominant

class aggravated the Kurdish problem. Later, the oligarchy made it unresolvable and today, the pains of democracy in Turkey are directly related to that authoritarian system. The constitution proclaims Turkey to be a democratic state. If the government declined to enforce the Constitution, merely by adding a few amendments, democracy could be made to work. Instead the government ignored the Constitutional Proclamations and preferred to resolve the problem through oppression, thus exacerbating the problem. Certain privileged groups emerged and the government rewarded them with benefits and avoided democratization. This again brought the Kurdish problem to an unresolvable stage. In other parts of the world, similar problems have been resolved through the growth of democracy and social organizations.

The foundations of the Turkish state provided for the inclusion of certain social organizations and principles in the Constitution to guide it toward democratization. These were either not implemented or were not improved upon. At times, principles were misused to the extent that even the military demanded this misuse be stopped. Democracy in today's Turkey has not reached the point of acceptance, but it has made some progress. There are comprehensive articles in the Turkish Constitution relating to fundamental human rights and freedoms. All segments of society desire improvement in the implementation of these articles, yet these articles are not implemented. Delaying the implementation of these articles is making their ultimate application more difficult. The Republic is undergoing many changes, both socially and constitutionally and in part, these changes are a result of our struggle.

Out of these changes has come a desire by the Republic for a solution to its social problems. Under the present system, however, either a separate Kurdistan or a federation between the Kurds and Turks would aggravate the problem. Historical and geographic characteristics of the Turkish and Kurdish cultures are intertwined. The State can easily resolve the differences. The United States, India and Switzerland are good examples of this and have even more complex, ethnic issues. It is obvious that this is not something Turkey has thought about. Present conditions are suitable for an ideal solution to the Kurdish problem. To make these changes for resolution, courageous steps must be taken by the government. In order to attain this, Constitutional Amendments are not even needed. But without good intentions on the part of the government their attempt will fail. Remnants of past rebellions have brought fear by the government of Kurdish issues, government paranoia of Kurdish intentions, and restriction of human rights provided by the Constitution. Elimination of these fears will help towards a solution and would not require much constitutional change. At the very least, it will provide basic rights for the Kurdish people.

The republic's historic foundation and the Constitution's self explanation is more suitable in resolving the Kurdish problem than what is thought about it. The biggest obstruction to the solution is the government's fear of Kurdish intentions. This supports its policy of regression and causes it to rule in a chauvinistic way denying Kurdish identity. It poisons the possibility of improving democracy in Turkey. By curtailing the government's fears, the resolution of the Kurdish problem will be much easier



and faster. History will show that the resolution of the problem is more cultural and linguistic than political.

To be able to take full advantages of existing democratic principles is a matter of education. By improving local administration and by encouraging participation of the people in politics will help find solutions to the problem. For example, the legislation of local administration is still on the agenda of the government, and is the most suitable tool to resolve the problem. By modifying certain existing laws it will be easier to find solutions. What we mean is, the problem is related to full implementation of democracy in Turkey. It is as simple as that.

The local people feel a heavy pressure from the existing feudalistic system. To eliminate this feudalistic system, true democracy is needed. The ethnic tribal system, religious sects and wealthy village owners are obstacles to democratization. Feudalism which by nature is not democratic, gets its support from the state and contributes to the Kurdish problem by tolerating a totally non-democratic environment. Feudalism denies individualism and a free society. The people from these classes claim to espouse democracy but they are actually the ones responsible for the absence of democracy. The latest PKK rebellion crushed a large part of authority enjoyed by this class. For this reason alone, the PKK movement should be considered a democratic revolution. There has been improvement in the area of individual freedoms. The local people under the name of HADEP (Pro-Kurdish legal party), during the latest mayoral elections expressed themselves by electing their own mayoral candidates in various towns. On behalf of democracy, the Kurds proved their existence. They proved that they can contribute to the improvement of democratization in the country. Even this short explanation can prove that the Kurdish question can be resolved within the practicality of democracy.

We say, creating separate organizations to resolve the Kurdish problem is not needed. We say the problem is not political. Solution to the problem is democratic unity of the state and integration of the Kurdish people. Since 1990 the State has recognized the local peoples cultural identity. They created special development projects called GAP. These two things signify that the State no longer uses methods of intimidation. It approaches the local people with more respect. The GAP project contributes a great deal to local peoples' economic and social progress. This proves that the State is able to take further steps and a positive feeling can develop toward the state. A democratic solution to the Kurdish problem can gain momentum, and be seen as the only to solve the problem.

The bottom line is the idea in this thesis: we can consider the state as a big piece of land beside the ocean, and the Kurdish rebellions are like waves which frequently strike the shore of this land. The heart of the matter is the existence of a tense atmosphere between the state and the Kurdish people. It is like the waves pounding on the shores of this land. The best solution to this problem is a democratic system. If this new democratic method is implemented and the state is realized the wave of

rebellious destruction will turn into construction in various government entities. It will be converted to serve the public.

Here lies the unimaginable creativity of democracy. Neither past unconsciousness made a positive contribution to the problem nor did a destructive approach eliminate the problem. They only contributed to history. Today, the government's agenda is the development of the country and improvement of democracy. A sustaining democracy able to remove obstructions in its path will resolve the Kurdish question in this historic stage of the Kurdish struggle.

3 — The Kurdish people's language and cultural rights are at the core of the issue:

In the first and second thesis of mine I said that the Kurdish intention is not to create a state and a country of its own, but instead to live freely in the country and in democratic unity with the Turkish state. That is why historic, political, and constitutional grounds are ripe for resolving this problem. As long as we approach the matter with good intentions, both sides can attempt to agree under a minimum of democratic conditions that their good intentions are to resolve the problem. Once they make that clear they will see that the Kurdish problem is not that complicated to resolve.

In the meantime the biggest obstacles are the barriers which exist to speaking the Kurdish language and recognition of Kurdish cultural rights. These two elements have not been clarified and this has made the Kurdish problem more complex. The government considered the political and cultural dimensions to be intertwined and this belief was the basis of the problem. It is unfortunate that an approach to the resolution of the problem that included separation of the political and the cultural was not attempted. A dogmatic and ideological approach to the problem by Turkey, made it more complex. When we take a look at Switzerland's example, we can see that four languages are used as official languages. Let's look at big countries like the United States, India, and Russia which had similar language issues as the Kurdish issue. Their diverse languages are freely used and diverse cultures are respected. These countries do not lose power. Contrarywise, they get more powerful. In Turkey, by prohibiting and obstructing these rights the people are forced to rebel and distance themselves from the state. The environment does not even provide healthy conditions for assimilation. Instead of curing a disease, they want to activate the disease. In the Constitution there are no articles that prohibit these rights. The Supreme Judge of the Constitutional Court, himself, said there are obstacles to language, culture and free speech. He said those obstacles should be eliminated.

The state noticed this matter, and as of 1990 they permitted certain positive steps to be taken, such as broadcasting in Kurdish, lifting restrictions on the language, and permitting the foundation of Kurdish institutes. The function of the folklore associations is part of these positive steps. If these kinds of organizations are even slightly encouraged by the state, with their educational functions, they will contribute a great deal to the solution of the Kurdish problem. One of the main deficiencies is the extent of illiteracy. There is no prohibition in the Constitution about reading and writing.

It is only a matter of resources and education and these problems can easily be overcome. Setting up preschools, institutes and permitting the learning of Kurdish history and the Kurdish language at the Universities will contribute a great deal in resolving the Kurdish problem. These privileges already exist in other countries. In the age of technology it is not easy to forbid them. The same thing is valid for radio and TV. Freedom in these areas is the most important element to a solution of the Kurdish problem. First, we must educate the non-Kurdish public about the problem. Preschools should investigate history, language and culture through the education of the people. Permitting the publication of books and newspapers, and airing of radio and TV will help resolve the conflict. Permitting this will not encourage separatism; on the contrary, it will discourage separatism. The state will be stronger and individuals will develop a loyalty to it because they will feel a part of it. The world has many examples of this kind of diversity. When Kurdish is permitted, Kurds will be more willing to learn and use the official Turkish language. Countries like the U.S. and in Asia where English is the official language, and in Africa, where both English and French are official, other languages are freely used among both aborigine and immigrant. Their peoples speak two, sometimes three languages while remaining loyal to their country.

When Turkey institutes a new policy permitting Kurdish rights, she will not need to be afraid of Kurds in neighboring countries anymore because she will have already provided its own people with their rights. Contrarywise, this step will contribute to the democratization of the region and will gain the support of the peoples of neighboring countries. A democratic solution to the Kurdish issue will have a great impact on the Middle East. The negative policies to date have had a negative impact on unity and progress. Resolving the problem by these methods will bring peace, democracy, unity and progress to Turkey. It will be proof that we will not have to experience once again the past sorrows and disappearances.

Consequently, if obstacles to cultural, linguistic, and human rights are lifted, complexities will dissipate. Turkish fears of division of the country will be eliminated and past mistakes generated by those fears will disappear.

Solution will bring wealth, unity and peace.

4 — A military approach to the problem is no longer relevant and should be abandoned.

Historical experience proves that a violent approach to a problem inflames the problem. In the beginning, violence may help to put the problem on the table. More violence, however, brings more destruction and sorrow and in the end a peaceful solution cannot be avoided. Kosovo is the latest example. Earlier Chechnya, Palestine and El Salvador were good examples. Of course, a peaceful approach is preferred.

The PKK's rebellion using its own methods, and leading the movement as a military force was legitimate. In 1990, it could have changed its approach from military to nonviolent and it might have succeeded. If the 1993 unilateral cease-fire, which was declared by the PKK, had been accepted by the government, it would have been a turning point. After 1993, with the Government's rejection of the cease-fire, violence

increased on both sides and more destruction resulted. At times the violence moved beyond the principles of war.

In the indictment it is stated that I was responsible for the death of 33 unarmed soldiers and some civilians. They neglected to mention, however, who was responsible for the destruction of over 3 000 villages and the disappearance of thousands of people from the Kurdish regions. If these disappearances and the destruction of these villages had been as clearly described as the report of the Susurluk incident, then the judge would have been objective in his assessment of the warlike encounters between the PKK and the state. The last fifteen years can be described as a mid-size war between the PKK and the state. It cannot be justified by a description of day-by-day actions. If PKK members acted outside the principles of war, they were punished. We always adhered to this policy. Similar conflicts in other parts of the world can be dirtier. In the past couple of years, even in small towns, hundreds of Kurdish people disappeared or were executed by the state. These atrocities must cease. Both sides must attempt to stop these outrageous acts which do not meet even the minimum standards of the principles of war.

The most important thing is this: We can use the last rebellion as an historic turning point. Both Turks and Kurds as well as international organizations are demanding a halt to this conflict. Let these problems find a democratic solution within the boundaries of a democratic republic. Confrontation is not respected anymore nor is it need. The most recent Kurdish rebellion is not like the others. It is the reason for the democratization of Turkey and at the same time a result of that democratization. The PKK has proven that. The latest elections show that the Kurdish people have successfully passed the test of democratization. There is no need for violence anymore. A new era has opened the way for democracy.

The most practical way to stop the violence is for the government to accept the recent PKK call for cease-fire. By accepting the cease-fire, trust is created, then comes the silencing of arms. In order to reach this goal it is imperative that the state takes immediate action. If the state and the public are more forgiving and more democratic, as I mentioned in the previous statement, and if the obstacles to the use of the Kurdish language and culture [are removed], a historic turning point can be reached. Integration of the Kurdish people with the state will occur. Negative perceptions and distrust of the state changed to positive perceptions and trust. The basis for rebellion and confrontation will be finished. If fundamental membership in Turkey, constitutional citizenship, are united with individual freedom, they will result in the resolution of the majority of the problems. What is left is economic. The GAP project is good beginning. Turkey's goal of reaching an historic democratic republic will be achieved. Under this formula there will be no reason for rebellion. Then, every corner of the country will experience unity, not separation, and togetherness instead of rebellion. Turkey will be stronger and no power will be able to destroy that unity.

5- All illegal organizations and primarily the PKK have to adjust themselves to normal political and legal ways within the frame work of peace

When a halt is put to armed conflict, all the illegal organizations so far will have to reinvent themselves in a democratic system. Especially under a general amnesty, when legal and political means of expression are respected, democratization will take a stronger hold. In the nineties, there was progress of freedom of assembly. The general political atmosphere due to maintaining strained relations brought about the last election results which are indicative of the lack of a system to offer a meaningful alternative through society's long-sought-after yearning for democratic normalization. Those who insist on unproductive ways are being abandoned. This is true for left, center, and right wing organizations. Political efforts that have no democratic basis are things of the past. This is more so for the left. Along with renewal and legalization, to put forth realistic democratic solutions to the society's challenges, and to this end, to forge extensive alliances are essential for progress and prosperity. Society's challenges cannot be met with the classical organizations and personnel. It must be understood that if organizations and personnel do not renew themselves, the time for democratic renewal and developing real solutions will have come to an end. Without this renewal, we will neither have respect for our past heritage nor step into the future with clarity.

The PKK also falls into this framework of renewal. The division between the left and the right in the seventies, fascism, socialism, and programmes that addressed national issues, and type of organizations and their operations should have all been put in the open in the nineties and the necessary corrections implemented. Through a general democratization throughout Turkey, instead of armed conflict, legal channels within the political framework should have sought programmes to address society's needs especially linguistic and cultural freedoms. These efforts would have been historical for the PKK and would have prevented the perpetual violence that brought so many years of pain to society. Of course, the state's ineffectiveness in working towards a solution along with those who pushed for confrontation, played a role in the impasse. Especially between 1993 and 1996 the losses were great due to the increase in confrontations and violence.

As late as it might be, the PKK will have to seek peace in its own capacity rejecting, the insistence on violence and it will be more effective in this endeavour as the state responds positively to the above-mentioned approaches. If practical opportunities, especially with the state's tacit approval, come about, a new "Peace Conference and Congress" will have to prepare for such an eventuality. There would be increased efforts for such a solution in the region as well as in the world. Those who reject a democratic solution and peace, will find themselves in isolation day by day.

Hence, the state must act in a way that befits its greatness. Especially, the government that represents the state must see this as a historical moment and as an opportunity to boldly solve one of its own challenges that face the nation. Recent history shows us that those who did not act like this have failed and the succession of governments is an indication of that. A solution is as much a key to many other general problems as it is to attend to society's need for peace, comfort, and basic necessities. History will not judge well those who don't act responsibly at this juncture.

The PKK will embrace democratic unity and programmes within the democratic republican principles by learning the meaningful lessons from its past experiences and discarding useless methods. It will demonstrate its creativeness with such implementations. Otherwise, it too will be eventually marginalized. Instead of repeating the methods of the painful and unproductive years, we must go forward on the path to peace with mutual and humble steps, with respect for each other and keeping in mind the delicate balances. To realize peace within the democratic republican system will be not only more difficult than war it will be more exalting and rewarding. Against all odds, those, who attempt to act for the sake of freedom, will, with time, realize the sanctity of their duty on the path of peace.

## **My Personal Status**

There have been many references to my personal status in the indictment. It is important for me, under a separate heading, to express my status with regard to war and rebellion and with regard to the history of the PKK.

My family was poor and had lost its tribal traditions, but it continued with strong feudal values. I studied in the Republic's elementary school located in a different village while commuting barefoot. The villages surrounding us were half Turkish, half Kurdish. My family from my mother's side could be considered Turkman and was from a neighboring village. Turkish and Kurdish were spoken together. Relations between our villages were very friendly, as there was no national animosity at all. As long as there was no provocation,

animosity would never develop and an exemplary brotherly coexistence prevailed. Their sympathy towards me continues, exceeding that of Kurdish villages. My opposition was to family feudal ties. It can be said, that my first rebellion was against a family and village structure which were far from responding to the expectations of a child. I believe this has been touched upon in a novel as a "first rebellion" by an author from Turkey. At an early age, after a sizable disagreement with the family and with many tears and continuous sobbing, I left the village. In this, the share of reaction to family members who want to live outside of a life of toil is great. At that time, the villagers who knew me as the one who would not "hurt a fly". On the other hand, when they saw a snake, they would call me "the snake hunter". I was also a hunter of birds. Roaming in the hills was a passion. I fought hard for wheat bread. My conflicts with my mother were strong. My mother was an independent, headstrong woman. My rebellious side may have come from her. My father was helpless, my mother was in control. I grew up without much love and discipline from the family. To bring myself up independently became an important part of me.

Up until the last year of university, I never fell below top ten in my class. Until high school, there were religious influences. This was a conservative, defensive reaction to a modern society. In the seventies, I developed an interest in leftist ideology and became

aware of my Kurdishness. As a person, I had high ethical standards, since I did not have a social connection and life with society which I considered to be bourgeois. In time, I dedicated myself completely to ideological work. I acted in unison with the Turkish left for a short while. However, because of lack of their attention to the national struggle, in the spring of 1973, I played a very important role in establishing the foundation of the PKK movement by leading a small group in the name of studying the Kurdish reality.

This was a research and propaganda effort. It seemed to me that the group needed to grow independently with ideological and historical knowledge. We engaged in intense ideological opposition to backward and separatist Kurdish nationalism as well as chauvinistic leftist movements in Turkey. There were Turkish friends joining us too. There were those joining the effort at leadership level like Haki Kader and Kemal Pir. To us, this represented Turkish-Kurdish unity at that time. Kemal Pir, whom we considered the martyr of the great death-fast, always said “ I believe that the freedom of our people can be achieved through the freedom of the Kurdish people”; this to us has remained a slogan. There is much that can be attributed to this unity of the group as well as the PKK. In 1975, I was the head of ADYOD (Ankara Democratic Higher Education Group). Before this, on 30 March 1972, as a result of a boycott we initiated at Political Science Department protesting the death of Mahir Cayan and his ten friends who were killed at Kizildere, I served a seven month sentence at Mamak prison.

In 1977, we prepared the manifesto and in 1978, with the help of Mehmet Hayri Durmus, the PKK programme was put into writing. In 1978, in the village of Fis in Diyarbakir, we decided to establish a political party. In the beginning of July 1979, with Etmem Akcan, we joined the Palestinians through Syria and Lebanon. Since 1982, we attempted to establish a base in Northern Iraq while organizing a military and ideological education with two hundred friends who joined us.

In actuality, I believe if it weren't for these efforts, there could have been many more tragic, merciless, and horrible events. The indictment, if it were to have analyzed the societal and individual reasons for these events, would not have had much trouble establishing reasons. Picture is not enough unless we can with all its aspects, place the living thing on display, we cannot make a healthy determination. Considering all activities as terrorism or terrorist only deepens the conflict. In reality, many of the actions that were taken were also the saddest events of my life. I have made criticisms of such incident which amount to volumes of books. Even the family feuds within Kurdish society that continue when they're analyzed, it becomes obvious how the society is structured and how its structure influences individuals. If I were to compare my role with the role of tribal conflict, as well as uprisings in similar situations, I see my role being much in control and least destructive. A keen observer of the PKK would immediately notice that in this instance, I have almost waged an internal war within the PKK. In addition, if you look at Bosnia, Kosovo, and ostensibly more civilized English-IRA conflict, the massacres occurring in Africa, the events that took place

under our responsibility should be seen as a great success. As the responsibility for the authority of the organization has increased, these types of events that exceed legally defensible levels have been minimized to a low level. I need to express my understanding of the use of force because I am constantly being branded chief terrorist and I am being condemned for having taken action.

It is clear that the actions taken under the leadership of the PKK are my responsibility. But it is not sufficient to analyze my philosophy of the use of force. The most difficult effort in my life has been containing, minimizing the destructive individual and structures under the guise of militancy and generally under the guise of rebellion. I would describe this with the following example. They have promoted the gypsy to governorship and the first thing he has done was to hang his own father. What has taken place is somewhat similar. I have branded some of the events as mindless, irresponsible gang activity. It is easy to understand, but difficult to establish control over personalities, whose character is such that they have grown up in an environment of tribal conflict, they are devoid of a political upbringing as well as military rules and they can kill each other for a chicken. In my opinion, the level at which we were able to control it has been a success.

From the beginning, the level of the use of force that I would tolerate was not allowed to exceed legal self defense. It is true that many suicide attacks that I considered to be heroic, but I did not order any one of them. In some cases, I did not even know of them. My efforts to contain and minimize these types of developments have been constant. This, to me, is necessary because of ethical reasons and my understanding of military rules. If it did not go like this, it would have been lost. My aim in self-defense can be linked to my freedom. In other words, freedom or death. Give us our freedom or kill us is the formula. My going abroad and establishing bases in the mountains was based on my connection to this understanding. Outside of this, use of force is in reality suicide. If within a state, even a limited amount of freedom is available, using force, even any kind of action that exceeds civil coexistence would be illegitimate.

At the beginning, particularly in the nineties, cultural, individual, and linguistic denials led to the circumstances of the use of force. Later, even the limited possibility of freedom became meaningless to me. Democratic and civilized ways of politics became more effective. First, in 1993, I expressed more frequently. It became more clear that in the event of a peaceful resolution of the conflict with the State, it felt increasingly likely that we forego the use of force. This was not because of the lack of choices, but rather than using meaningless force, the belief in the fact that achieving democratic politics was getting real.

In this regard, I find that my principle shortcoming was during the cease fire episode, in not seeing and evaluating the preparations the state went through and therefore missing an historic opportunity. A subsequent use of force resulted in much loss and much pain. In addition, it can be said that it led to both sides exceeding the control limits and causing much greater destruction with both sides looking like gangs. I realized this and as a result made an intense effort. After 1996 having received certain indirect



messages from the State, I attempted to control this by way of cease-fires. I attempted to prepare the groundwork for democratic politics. I must point out, even though it was not at the desired level, I was able to bring about changes in a controlled manner to allow a democratic solution.

At a personal level, it must also be noted that one of the principal efforts I expended was to bring the PKK's 70's programme and propagandist style into the 90's by changing it. I emphasize that democratisation in Turkey in a real sense would propel the heavily feudal Kurdish society into the mainstream democratic unity. This is well known by the appropriate departments of the state. As for the Kurds, the fact that the best kinds of freedom and independence can all be achieved within the framework of democratic republic would not be an over-statement. In the indictment the terms "freedom and independence" are viewed within the framework of a different state which I do not see as such. In [my] last evaluations I have alluded to a free society within a democratic republic of Turkey modelled after the agreements of the 1920's, to be a more free and independent one. On the contrary, a separate Kurdish state would actually be a more dependent and a servile one. I am on the record for proposing such ideas on numerous occasions. I have many times emphasized that those who are free and independent will unite and form a stronger union. When servitude is forced upon a unit, it will always weaken the union as it is demonstrated by many examples of uprisings [in the history of the state.] The main aim is, as was the intention when the Republic was founded, to keep in mind the shortcomings of the past and come up with a contemporary democratic solution. My recent analysis of the situation were all towards a solution by considering other experiments in the world and Turkey's history overall. My defense, in essence, rests on the premise that it will set the stage for a historical solution [for our problem.]

After these developments, I voiced my suggestions of ending the armed struggle and if need be, adjusting the PKK along the requirements of a democratic republic. Alongside the need to make preparations for a response by the state body either directly or indirectly to our efforts, I expressed the necessity not to eliminate the possibility of this spilling over into even the creation of a "Peace Congress". At this stage, I see as my first and foremost duty to secure a comprehensive peace, one dictated by historical realities, and current world developments. It is time for an end to the two hundred year old heavy conflict both within the state body and with the Kurdish insurrections. The most important politic to answer this violent period must be societal consensus and reformation, and this I believe, can best be reached under a democratic system. I have tried to emphasize the need and my wish for the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be a century of peace.

There are certain important matters mentioned in the indictment regarding the approach to the Marxist ideology which I feel the need to stress. Along with my criticisms of real socialism which commanded the world of the seventies, I have criticized marxism for falling short from the attaining of a socialist democracy and as I gradually saw its growing influence. Coupled with a dogmatic outlook, marxism lessened the chances of creative approaches to the challenges which faced us. I tied the dissolution

of the Soviets to this shortcoming. In fact, I foresaw it and I considered it not as the fall of socialism but as a result of the failure of democratization. I have also tied the dissolution of the Turkish left to this tradition. I have developed assessments similar in nature in writing as well. In this way, I have taken into consideration the struggle to overcome its influence in the body of the PKK. I have always felt the need and the necessity to overcome the challenges which historical and current developments have inevitably posed against the classic approaches to the [Marxist] Program. I retain the belief, however, that socialism can again respond to our fundamental societal and modern problems by demonstrating its democratic understanding and practice. This does entail, though, a reform starting from its very base. Until the destruction [caused by] real socialism is overcome, not a complete collapse like in Russia, nor a superficial critique can lead to democratic socialism. Despite the fact that capitalism too has aged, its ability to reform itself along democratic standards is the key to its progress and durability. The lack of these mechanisms for development in socialism is a key factor in its dissolution as well as its inability to fix a strong starting point. We can see this most concretely in Turkey. Societal problems have worsened because democratic socialism could never develop in Turkey, despite the great societal need. It is clear the approach of the Right has aggravated Turkey's problems. In the future, as Turkey addresses its fundamental problems, including a democratic approach to the Kurdish problem, in a successful manner, the Left will regain its feeling of being useful and in fact essential for democracy to prevail. I strongly believe this, and a free union [of peoples] requires this.

I would now like to address my approach to homeland and patriotism. It carries some importance that the 125. article indictment against me includes treason and the intention to form a separate state. I find the slogan "A free homeland or death" meaningful. What is unique here is that the concept of a shared homeland and state and an understanding of a free citizen and society present during the initial national liberation and the formation of the [Turkish] republic never developed. In particular, a great weakness of the Kurds is that either their feelings of patriotism towards the land that they were born in is weak or else they fail to see and feel to belonging to Turkey, which they are a part of. This creates room for misinterpretations. The concept of a separate Kurdistan arises from these circumstances. If the reality is not put forward, it can be risky. The understanding that I have gained as a result of my experience in this struggle dictates that the concept of one shared homeland and nation can be best achieved by the multiethnic models demonstrated by the United States or Switzerland, where either one nation is given official status or more than one language is considered official. This concept must be grasped in Turkey for a democratic resolution of the Kurdish problem. That which Turkey has lacked until now is the aspect of democracy. The concept of a modern citizen includes freedom for all individuals, languages, and cultures, and when there is freedom, we can speak of an independent homeland. These two concepts in Turkey are thought of as contradictory, as though the one concept will weaken the other. This is a fundamental error. This is one of the most important

democratic problems which needs to be reckoned with. I believe I have reached a comprehensive solution to this [problem].

A similar notion applies to the concept of an independent state. Before asking how much a state belonged to us, we began by blaming a certain person or a group and thus we fell into dogmatism. This affected our political thoughts and movement. When I contemplated this issue more scientifically, I came to the conclusion that instead of rejecting the authority of the state, we should have rejected it in so far as it was representative of an oligarchic system, and by seeking to destroy such a system not for the sake of independence but for democratization, and furthermore, not as a necessity for achieving a separate state but as a necessity of achieving a free union of peoples and as a democratic duty. I can confidently say that my conclusions on the concept of homeland and understanding of state, which is present in a weak and destructive form in the Turkish Left, and the concrete realities of this matter can, if realized, bear important results. If these wrong and superficial outlooks are not challenged and overcome, in particular by the [Turkish] Left and by Kurdish nationalists, problems will be aggravated and they will find it harder to develop alternatives. Their growing marginalization points towards this. The Right was able to rise to power and maintain it by adopting an ultra nationalism more as an opportunism and for the interest of expediency, and political gains. There is a danger in their outlook of a free citizen and an independent state as they lapse far from the concept of integration and instead flame the fires of separatism. The problem in Turkey of a positive approach to an integrational homeland, nation, and state is as much a problem of political culture as it is one of ideology. In my defence, I have essentially demonstrated my share of understanding of a proper integrational, democratic outlook and a political philosophy capable of grasping various political outlooks. I strongly believe my ideas can constitute a framework for the next stage of developments. Developing relations with foreign powers capable of transcending this framework has not been possible for me under my conditions. The ignoble conspiracy put out for me by those who I treated as friends is the greatest demonstration of this fact. If I was a puppet, I believe that they were strong enough to hide me from Turkey, with her many foes. Just the opposite, they knew that in the long term, they could not use me against Turkey, and without any regard to international laws or human standards, and in order to add fuel to the conflict raging in Turkey, they played various games of not accepting me and handing me over to Turkey. All my efforts outside of Turkey have been under the umbrella of the slogan, "Free citizen and democratic republic." It is uncontestable that I have put my whole being forward towards this objective, and that I have crystallized my personality along the concepts of a free citizen and a democratic union. And every passing day, history substantiates this and will prove it. When I examine my own person under the impressions that important political developments and activism has left, I see that it can also be interpreted as a contribution towards societal knowledge, will, and activism. The reality is one of a sick people searching for a remedy under the problems which have accumulated over hundreds of years — they can neither live under the weight of the problems nor can

they assimilate what is being forced upon them. It is the story of a people yearning to reach the modern age. In this revolution, I have felt the greatest amount of pain; all those faults of history, instead of it being owned up by others, have fallen solely on my shoulders. This great injustice that I have been inflicted with is clear. I feel it is my right to ask such questions as: Who is responsible for history, so many rebellions? Who is it that aggravates problems? Where does hiding and suppressing a problem act as a solution? Who is responsible for this societal reality, like no other, which denies the right of [a people] to speak their language? Who has given much to the state and for the fraternity of peoples and in the end comes face to face with denial and [rejection]?

The totality of what I have wanted to do is to provide solutions to some of these problems. The rebellion that we are currently experiencing is part of the solution. Like an infection, if societal problems are not dealt with on time, they can fester. This problem has festered, and like an infected wound, it has burst and caused pain in all other parts of the body. Taking this parallel further, even normally healthy parts of the body have gotten affected from this infection even though it may not be fair, because it is a problem of a body whose systems are interconnected. The eruption of this rebellion is only half of the solution. What needs to be done after this is to medicate the wound and heal it. I call this societal peace. I understand the depth of this concept, and feel responsible towards its fulfillment. I believe I have resolved in my personality and its depth the characteristics necessitated for attaining peace. I contemplate the theoretical and political dimensions and objectives of such a personality in great intensity. The thing which I would like to share most of all with the state and with all levels of the society is my study of peace. I have no doubts that what I can share about this subject will be relevant at a historical and societal level. The fundamentals of freedom dictate that we must once again develop our ties to the state and society, and make way for a reconciliation which has gained a historical foundation. This can be achieved around the framework of a democratic republic. If I am given the opportunity, I will direct all my efforts towards attaining, and representing the democratic union of free citizens and peoples with the republic, in peace and fraternity.

## **Conclusion: Democratic Union is the next historic step of the Republic**

Even though the Prosecutor may, on the basis of the programme and my extensive explanations, reach the conclusion that the aim was to set up a separate state and that my words “Everything for Independence and Liberty” means just that, I have attempted in this defence to explain that, as one of those most responsible for this historic experience, my aim was to achieve democratic union. While I do not have the documents of the speeches I made, I indicated, through the unilateral cease-fires I called and through indirect dialogues, that independence and liberty for the individual

and for the people could only be achieved within the context of Turkey's integrity and the democratic structure of the republic. Looking at it in a scientific way, the Kurdish people's quest for a state of its own cannot be a realistic proposition, given that this people is surrounded on all sides by neighbours who would find it unacceptable, on a largely mountainous terrain, divided economically, socially, culturally and politically, weighed down by feudal values, lacking even an alphabet, with most of its members working in the metropolises. Moreover, both the historical experience of the past two centuries and the recent PKK uprising have shown that, given the existing balance of military forces, moves towards separation would exacerbate the problem. This method would cause difficulties for both sides, they would suffer great pain and losses. But neither would separation come about, nor would the problem be resolved. The disease would become more severe. The disease cannot be cured by annihilating the patient, and the part cannot be cured by separating it off from the whole, that is the state, of which it is a main element. The correct method is to overcome The rotten parts, the laws which cannot be democratised, which even the highest authorities of the state admit to being obstacles to liberty, the outdated institutions, the approaches based on fear and denial; the feudal social structures (tribes, sheikhs, landlords) in the region and the fear of the state — all these must be overcome; that is the correct method. Integration must be achieved with the republic, as true constitutional citizens in a democratic union, on the basis of free individuals and a free society.

Both the experience of our recent uprising and many experiences throughout the world show that the solution must be sought within such a democratic system and that insistence on suppression and on resistance lead to nothing but exacerbating the impasse. The recent problems in Kosovo show the necessity for conciliation. As I have tried to explain in my defence, our organised and active movement put forward the idea of a separate political structure more frequently in its programme and declarations at the beginning; but experience showed us and we tried to stress in the 1990's the importance of free union, that the practical way to freedom as a peoples was through the integrity of the Turkish country and state, that the democratic system could resolve this problem. I believe that the state confidently knows that this was our decision. What is important is not words, not even the programme and principles, what matters is the reality of life and the struggle which should be enshrined in the principles and the programme. Life and the struggle have led us to the conclusion that "if you do not wish to live as a slave, as one whose existence is denied, you have to learn to live within a free union". This cannot be doubted. Moreover, many similar problems in the world arose first with a separatist aim, but proved that living together is more correct and means powerful unity and wealth. The tendency towards unity is proving itself stronger than that towards separation and unions across the world are developing economically, culturally and politically. In short, the world-wide tendency also forces us towards free, democratic union. We live in a period when even historic enemies in the direction of such conciliation.

Therefore, the failure to see the problems within the context of the social reality our peoples' who have largely made their history together, have opposed together common dangers and enemies in critical matters of life and death, and have lived very much side by side; the failure to reflect this reality in the constitution within the process of democratisation; and even where it is so reflected, the failure to eliminate certain barriers in front of freedom and equality — not only do these failures exacerbate social problems, but they sometimes lead to the hardest, most ruthless acts and to their consequences. You cannot talk about a joint founder member and then have a language ban which nobody in the world has. This in itself is enough strikingly to explain the painful truth.

In that case a failure to see the social problems of our people that have lived most of their histories together and at the most crucial periods of life or death have resisted joint dangers and enemies together, and to be unable in particular to find a constitutional expression within developing democratisation and the failure to lift certain obstacles to freedoms and equality, not only worsens social problems but can also lead to the most ruthless actions and consequences. You say “ joint founder member”, and then bring in an unprecedented language ban. This is sufficient to explain in a striking way our painful reality.

The most significant conclusion reached is that at last the period of historical rebellions has ended or has to end. However, for this to occur the historical democratic secularisation movement of the Turkish Republic has to succeed. In a democratic Republican system there is no place for violence. Revolt or revolution cannot be the way to resolve problems. A peaceful constitutional evolutionary path is valid. The end of the twentieth century ordains this. A single whole in these lands respecting the will for a free life is the path to a sacred peace and great development for the entire society.

Within this framework, it is up to our people in the East, to the Kurdish people, to manage the intensive need for a democratic society and to do this in unison with the State in a renewed democratic unity to overcome rotten feudal values. It is the task of the Kurdish people and bodies, to become enlightened with the democratic republic's criteria of freedom and equality to gain a will and in this way to become the real founding element and become constitutional citizens and a society. As the history of rebellions ends the coming period is one of great democratisation and of combining this with the principles and institutions of the republic and with democratic criteria. This as a path of reform which will progress slowly but its consequences will be developing and strengthening. Our historical experience and reality demonstrate to us that there is no other way and that even if there is, it is a deadend deepened by pain and loss. It is a matter now of determining the democratic criteria for sharing fraternal life freely, together, on a reciprocal social historical basis, not to establish who is right, who is wrong, who lost more, caused more harms or who is strong and who is weak. We must found our democracy together and develop it. It is essential to be aware of the labour of all the martyrs in the founding and protection of the republic, of our martyrs, to

commemorate the founder with gratitude and respect and to proudly salute the flag. But as the present generation we must fulfil our contemporary duties.

This is in fact what we wanted to do . We wanted to overcome the serious backwardness, ignorance and slavery in the East with progress, enlightenment and freedom. This is a republican duty. There can be no doubt that this was the essence. However, look at the paradox that we are on trial charged with the greatest crime against the republic. Within a seemingly legal framework. This is unfortunate. It is not an expression of our essence. History will demonstrate that this movement did not target the founder of the republic but was a movement aiming to curing a decaying, sick entity and to ensure its two legs or the part that needed to be healthiest was restored to health and strength. Ataturk also founded the republic under a death sentence, and against the Sultanate which appointed him. What he demolished was not the essence of the state but the Sultanate and Caliphate forms which could not adopt to the needs of the age. It should not be misunderstood, we are not claiming greatness for ourselves. How from the beginning I have asserted that it is not the essence of the republic which we oppose, but the oligarchic, undemocratic, feudal values and structures in Turkish society. The goal has been a democratic republic.

What should be realised under its constitution is a free citizen and society. The republic can only gain great strength from this. This was what we understood by the task of modernity. Not to take action would have been disrespectful to the republic.

Although its ideology, programme and actions may appear opposite, if, as a result of a great struggle through belief, determination and practice we have reached this stage, we must respect this. If necessary people can reach the truth by learning lessons from great mistakes and errors. History and society mainly progress in this way. It is only God who can move forward on a straight path without making mistakes. Even prophets have admitted that they are not immune to making mistakes and errors. Many mistakes have been made by us, by myself. They have caused great pain. In my defence I have explained this in essence. But it is also a fact that we have proved that we possess the will to turn from this. Perhaps this will not acquit us according to law but we are certain that history and society will acquit us. If we had grown up in a democratic society would such a revolt have occurred? Anything can be expected from people who prohibit themselves, who attempt to conceal the words that come out of their mouths in a guilty panic over their mother tongue. This should be well understood.

Doesn't this situation, unique in contemporary civilisation, offer an excuse? I want to explain this insistently: If I am frightened of recognising even myself how can I recognise the republic and its whole legal order, how will I become contemporary? This is the people's reality I have experienced. If even as an alternative a large majority have not become Turkicised this cannot be the fault of the people. In any case it has become apparent that such a method is not contemporary and cannot work through coercion. In the event the mistakes and errors have been reciprocated, grown larger and in the latest rebellion given their merciless verdict. If we have not lost our willpower

and if we accept each other with real contemporary criteria on the basis of learning lessons, it is our fundamental task once again to open the way to freedom and equality within a democratic system on the basis of our motherland and republic, no longer ever resorting to violence. We should have a sacred unity founded on an unshakable consciousness and will as a response to the loss, pain and suffering of all sides, first and foremost the martyrs. This should not be seen as an illusion. Let us open the pages of history, we will see that all meaningful unities have been established in this way.

I see this trial, for all these reasons, as an historic, social trial. I see it as the bringing to trial of the latest explosion of a serious problem, the Eastern Kurdish Question that worsened as the Republic did not fulfil its tasks at the time. The esteemed judges will undoubtedly make their considerations and give their verdict according to law. However, with a question which has such a historical and social background understanding should be shown to the fact that I did not feel the need to make much of a legal defence. This is what I expect from the prosecutors. If necessary, my lawyers will and should make a defence concentrating on the legal aspects. What I am endeavouring to achieve with all my might is a resolution of the question without there ever again being a resort to violence. I have consciously concentrated my defence case in this direction, because it is a necessity of my loyalty and respect for the society and its lofty expression, the state. I never even talk about treason. At most about the fulfillment of the needs of the National Pact within contemporary criteria. In this context my defence is for the necessity to implement whatever the founding principles of the National Pact expressed, in particular, for the Kurdish people and, if it participated in the creation of the republic as a founding people, that this should be restored. I say that for the Kurdish-Turcoman communities living outside the National Pact (borders) it is the moral and political duty of the Turkish Republic to assist them to live in the state in which they are situated in possession of their democratic identities without suffering genocide. This is not interfering in the internal affairs of another state. It is an historical and humanitarian approach. In my defence it is the integrity of the country and existence of the independence of the state which I believe I have served to clarify. The essence of this is the implementation of democracy. In this context I believe I have carried out an historical service. What the Kurds all over Turkey and wherever they are concentrated should do is expend great efforts for democratisation. This may bring results. Economic and social — cultural development will lead to a strengthening, enriched unity within democratic politics and the republic. I have endeavoured to explain my great belief in the realistic nature of this approach and how it will lead to success. I have also explained how the violent approach no longer has validity and what a serious irresponsibility it would be to repeat it and how I have made great efforts to prevent this happening, that I need to do more, that even my sole justification for living is to seize the peace phase. I am determined to do this. I have stated that the peace option is more difficult than that of war but it is meaningful and I believe it will succeed. It will be my sole aim from now on to make great efforts in this direction. I am totally aware that it is my duty to take this to our whole people,



including our organised forces. Every war has a peace and I believe and am determined that the democratic republic means a free peace and that the resolution will develop in this framework.

I have emphasised the need for the PKK, in the vanguard of the revolt, to pass beyond this period and orient itself towards preparations for change responding to the needs of the legal and political process and reconstruction and a new programme within the criteria of a democratic system. I have stated that organisations, as well as individuals, will only survive and achieve success as long as they respond to the historical requirements, otherwise they will regress and become marginalised. I have also stressed the need for the PKK to change according to the peace environment and if necessary, and the state is open to it, for a “peace congress”.

It is apparent that my defence is designed to be a contribution to a possible solution rather than a response to the allegations one by one. In addition to analysing the past I have sought to find an answer to shared life in the light of democratic institutions and experiences and also within history and our present reality. I have also stressed in particular that the manner of the democratic resolution will not only protect the integrity of the country and the power of the republic but also strengthen it. I have also pointed out that togetherness established through free will and consciousness is the soundest of unities, and that the republic and democratic unity are the soundest guarantees against all kinds of discrimination.

It is certain that when this, the most difficult problem in the history of the republic, is resolved, Turkey will, with the strength it receives from internal peace, be in a position to become a leading power in the region. Leadership in the Middle East will imply influence from Central Asia to the Balkans and the Caucasus. The resolving power of the democratic system will lead to offers of just interventions and support, and requests for them in these regions which have many contradictions and problems. Peace will then be the dominant force. A developed economy and cultural progress will also contribute to great wealth. Turkey is entering the next millennium with this perspective. The Kurdish Question has been a hindrance. Its solution means a considerable strengthening followed by the achievement of historic success. If we are to discuss foreign manipulation the fundamental aim is to push back the current process and that they believe they can succeed in this by using the Kurdish Question. Such manipulation has occurred at also critical periods in history. When there has been no solution it has been successful, too. In that case our task is to resolve the problem ourselves and turn it into our own powerful weapon against the manipulators and schemers. In my defence I have established that this is both very possible and our only hope. Our personal experience is the best proof of this. In that case when we say that this fraternal solution that we will realise for the first time with free will is to be a new historical process we are right. This trial should be the most important peace trial in the history of the republic. It is possible to leave behind all the pain, fear and backwardness brought on by rebellions through peace realized by a democratic system. It is my most fundamental democratic ideal to make my trial the opportunity

for an honourable peace. My defence is fundamentally connected to this aim of mine, and this is the most correct path. We cannot pay our debt to the country and all our people with a more precious thing than this. The “peace at home, peace in the world” principle of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who saw before everyone else with his profound awareness that without a just and honourable peace life would have no meaning in the country or in the world, is our even more striking expression of life.

We believe that the republic he founded will only bring peace on a democratic basis and that this will be of the greatest service to the world and regional peace. Esteemed judges, in responding to the matters in the chief prosecutor’s indictment in this way I have endeavoured to answer not only on my behalf but also, since I am held responsible, on behalf of the PKK and the problems of the section of the people that rebelled in its name.

However documented the accusations may be I have established the existence of the problem and reasons pertaining to the necessity to make efforts for a solution. Reciprocal mistakes and errors have taken place in the revolt. I have stated the lack of need and mercilessness of many actions. I have tried to express the fact that I experience the pain to my marrow and am one of those who most thirsts for peace. There is ruthlessness in all rebellions, and also in their suppression. But our greatest consolation is to take this from being a constantly aching illness of our republic and turning it into a healthy part and into a force for peace. I believe our people need this as much as bread or water. For this reason I say that this trial should be the milestone of sacred peace. There is no way to pay the debt to the republic except through democratic unity. It should be definitely known that we will only be able to pay this debt as free citizens. A republic of enslavement and denial is not possible. In this context I have no doubt that our efforts and struggle have been loyal to the essence of the republic, and have been a necessity to achieving that. I believe in the achievement of the essence of the republic. In this context I wish to express my belief that our people, which has been unable to become a people of the republic on account of harsh feudal conditions, will at last be happy in peace under the slogan “ How happy to be the people of a democratic republic” and in reaching the reality of a free people that will reject secession, and that it has seized this historic process within Turkey’s territorial integrity and state presence along with all the people and will succeed in this.

The Ted K Archive

Abdullah Öcalan

Declaration on the Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question  
The Defence Arguments that the Head of the PKK Abdullah Ocalan Presented at  
“The Trail of the Century”  
1999

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This is Ocalan’s 1999 defense in court.

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