

OSMAN MURAT ÜLKE, a Turkish war resister unable to leave the country, answers four of the seminar questions

1- What part did/does international solidarity play in your strategy?

- In the beginning (1992-1993), when the antimilitarists were still in the process of gathering, the ICOM (International Conscientious Objectors Meeting) played an essential role:
 - Antimilitarist content and discourse were enriched in a wider framework of international experience and pluralism.
 - Contacts with individuals representing various organizations opened up many possibilities for exchange, mutual visits, joint projects, solidarity against repression and financial assistance.
- Antimilitarists faced increasing repression in the following years. International delegations to court trials helped
 - raising awareness in the Turkish public,
 - informing the international community about the struggle and repression in Turkey,
 - protecting antimilitarists from extremely brutal forms of repression,
 - reflecting on campaigning strategies and applying new ideas/concepts.
- Antimilitarists have built up long-term projects, exploring new methods and contents:
 - Some were trained as nonviolence trainers abroad. Multinational trainings both abroad and in Turkey took place in the following years. A trainers' collective still provides nonviolence trainings for other organizations in Turkey and trains new trainers.
 - Various forms of the "Theatre of the Oppressed" were used in actions and in trainings.
 - International days as May 15, November 9, November 25, September 1 and December 1 became constant dates for actions in Turkey, introducing also an insight about international discussions and events to the Turkish public.
 - Some antimilitarists from abroad spent several years with the movement in Turkey and provided fresh inputs and a constant link to the movements abroad.
- Fundraising and financial assistance: The antimilitarist movement in Turkey mainly consists of marginals, not only in the ideological sense, but also economically. The movement never got close to the possibility of financing itself. The international relations made it possible to work based on projects, financed through fundraising. International partners furthermore raised donations in times of crisis, especially when legal costs during CO trials arose.
- Reflection on ideological and practical challenges
 - Questions concerning CO and total objection were also discussed in the international context, closely observing legal and social developments in other countries, in regards to upholding an antimilitarist perspective.
 - Feminist/anti-patriarchal/antisexist as well as gender and anti-heterosexist discussions and practice.
 - Reflections on nationalism (and totalitarianism), poverty and exploitation in regards to antimilitarist analysis.
 - The international experience, history and contacts as a whole provided important inputs and reference points for the ideological framework.

2- What did you hope to gain through it?

The antimilitarists, organized in the Izmir War Resisters' Association (ISKD), were determined from the beginning to place their struggle firmly in an international context. Militarism is closely tied in a global network and political system. So it is self-evident that antimilitarists target militarism in global solidarity. Moreover is internationalism the natural counter to reactionary isolationism and nationalism, both grounds on which militarist sentiment prospers perfectly.

The antimilitarists never saw internationalism and solidarity as a one-sided flow, but also as a forum to share, to learn and to convey. They did not only report about suffered repression, but also brought in their perspective and experience.

It is obvious that international experiences can't be adopted directly, without amendment and a good grasp of local circumstances and challenges. The antimilitarists of Turkey haven't achieved a complete synthesis, which has its causes probably rather in the general difficulty to build up a stable (and growing) movement under constant pressure.

International solidarity was never meant to provide a substitute for local short-comings, but nevertheless these problems couldn't be solved in a satisfactory manner and the ISKD disbanded after 10 years of intense campaigning and activism.

Still the established international network of and for Turkish antimilitarists proved to be solid and was easily resurrected in times of need for imprisoned COs, even a few years after ISKD disbanded .

The contacts are still alive with occasional small-size projects running and a frequent exchange of information.

3- What did you experience?

The answer to this question is already included in 1 and 2.

4- What unwanted side-effects did you have to cope with?

Actually none really. But there was always some kind of tension within ourselves concerning the ease with which we organized the international aspects of our work and the difficulty in organizing a maturing movement. Two problems were prevailing:

1- Gaining new people, determined to direct the movement.

2- Building an autonomous financial basis.

Internationalism delayed the negative effects of these problems, but couldn't (and wasn't meant to) solve them.