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Turkey

“No to the fundamentalists! No to the generals!”

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Over 35,000 people attended a rally in Istanbul on 26 May, opposing both the fundamentalist-conservative block and the growing military threat. This event was organised by the Liberty and Solidarity Party (Ä-DP), a regroupment party which includes most currents of the 1970s far left, including the Fourth International current, Yeniyol. The event was also supported by the left-wing trade unions DISK and KESK, and the Kurdish nationalist party HADEP, which mobilised some 3,000 sympathisers. A number of famous intellectuals, artists and journalists also supported the initiative.

At a moment when Turkish politics seemed polarised between pro-military and fundamentalist-nationalist poles, this audacious initiative is widely considered as the high point of the Ä-DP's one-year existence. It demonstrated the legitimacy of the "third way," and stressed democratic demands at a time when some "democrats" are increasingly sympathetic to a coup d' etat. It was the largest autonomous far-left inspired demonstration since the 1970s.

The demonstration took place in Sultanahmet square, scene of an earlier demonstration of 100,000 Refah supporters, protesting the army's intention to close most of the religious secondary schools. The Ä-DP subsequently called a "press conference" in downtown Ankara, which attracted 25,000 people. A similar number had joined the Ä-DP contingent at Ankara's May Day parade earlier this year. Party leaders talk of "a rise in the movement, these last several months."

The Ä-DP is not yet seen as a credible alternative to the big parties. But thanks to initiatives like this demonstration, it is increasingly perceived as a serious, legitimate pole to the left of social democracy.