



***Ekmek, adalet, özgürlük! Anarchism in Istanbul today***

Two interviews with Turkish anarchists

David Kimball



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## Author's Preface.

In my time in Istanbul over 2013 I was impressed with the fluidity of the non-hierarchical organisation present in the anarchist-communist politics of the DAF, Kolektif 26A, the writers of Meydan Gazetsi and the young members of the LAF.

After drinking the revolutionary lemonade (not Kool-Aid, I swear) at 26A Sahaf near my home in Kadıköy, I came to have long and good discussions with many of them over a period of many months. This eventually led to us being tear gassed by the Turkish *polis* and chased by a TOMA on May Day, us being the only anarchists in Istanbul to participate in the May Day march with the revolutionary trade unions of DiSK. These events are a great bonding experience. Likewise, the DAF formed an explicit presence on top of the stairs that linked Gezi Park and Taskim Square, symbolically joining the disparate labour elements of Taksim and the largely civil, student oriented movement in Gezi Park. They spent much of June handing out literature and critiques of the event as they happened and broadcasting updates and footage across the net at the same time.

The two things that *really* impressed me, though, were, first, the success of the Kolektif 26A project, an attempt to organise an anti-capitalist, anarchist-communist economic model to socialise anarchism among the Turkish people, as well as a sharing and solidarity model to meet the financial needs of the Kolektif's members and, second, the strength and clarity that I witnessed on International Women's Day of the anarchist women in Taksim and on Istiklal Cd, marching in the night in the busiest and most touristic part of Istanbul, capital of the most patriarchal culture I've lived in.

I was able to interview Özgür and Hüseyin from Kolektif 26A and Özlem of the anarchist women's group in August 2013. Some of the dialogue was edited for clarity and some on-the-fly debates on translation and technicalities have been excluded to save the reader some tedium, but otherwise the words are largely as they went into the recorder. Almost certainly, any mistranslation or misrepresentation is the fault of the author (if the person who spoke the least and contributed only enough to move the conversation along can be called the author of the interview).

I hope this will serve as an introduction to fellow *yabancı* to the successes of a group of anarchists in Turkey in 2013, which in turn can be inspiring to us and our efforts to free ourselves from patriarchy, hierarchy and state.

DK,  
Bologna, Italy,  
September, 2013.

# Hüseyin and Özgür of Kolektif 26A, 6th of August, 2013.

## The start of 26A.

**David:** So how long has the Kolektif 26A been going?

**Özgür:** This place, 26A Sahaf Kadıköy, for three years. Taksim 26A, five years. The other place in Kartal, for one year. The collective started in Taksim.

**David:** And you're named after the street address of the cafe in Taksim.

**Özgür:** Yeah.

**David:** Why did you start this project, and what were your goals?

**Hüseyin:** Five years ago, the people who created 26A were acting together and most of us were anarchists. The 26A project was something of an economic model that would allow us to make our theories real. We would come together to talk about this possible project and we wanted to create an anti-capitalist model, without hierarchy, without any boss and that the people involved in the project would get the needs of their life met.

Also it is another way to talk about anarchism with people. In Turkey anarchism has a bad meaning, equal to terrorism. When you are in the streets and say to people anarchist it's like you are a terrorist with guns and you have the capability to bomb any building. So we have to have some ways other than the political ones, to keep the political ones - but to talk about sharing and solidarity to people, that this is anarchism. Like at 26A people see the coffees and bookstore, they see the relationship here between people and they are trying to understand what this is. They are like, "You are saying you have no boss? So you are saying you are volunteering working here?" So this is abnormal for them, so this question mark is a useful question mark for us, to start talking about anarchism in a social way.

We can talk anarchism with young people who we are attracting from political work or Gezi Park, for example, but it is also important for us to talk about anarchism to a man his forties, like our neighbour here in Kadıköy who is making water pipes.

To say: "This is anarchism. We have no boss, no hierarchy, the people are here voluntarily working."

**D:** Many of the people involved in 26A are involved in other projects, such as DAF, LAF, Meydan and so on. What came first and where did the people who formed 26A come from? <sup>(1)</sup>

**Ö:** We created this collective first. Some are part of the Istanbul Ihale and High School Anarchist Action and that after this we create 26A. After this came the DAF. Ihale has two meanings: event and public. Istanbul Ihale.

**H:** Ihale was a political group before the DAF. Not just in Istanbul, there were also some people in Ankara. There was a newspaper, published every month or two months and a group of people making protest about social problems, the economy, the state, working class struggles. Also there was LAF. Individuals from these groups came together to create 26A to socialise anarchism in the public in a better way. These groups have connections, but it's important to understand that 26A not is not just a creation of these political groups, it has also has it's own motivity - they have connections, but now they act separately.

**Ö:** Not everybody from DAF is in 26A. We want this separate. One is an economic model, one is about politics. And there are people who are just in 26A, not the other groups.

**D:** Hüseyin, you were part of 26A when it started. Can you describe how you came to have a cafe and how you decided upon that as the business model?

**H:** At first, while we were talking about this project, there appeared a chance for us to make our thoughts more practical. One of our friends, who is not anarchist, offered us the place that is now 26A Taksim. He was like, "I have this place and I don't want to make coffee anymore, if

you want I can give you this place and the furniture inside at a very cheap price." So it is for us like a chance to make our thoughts practical, so we accepted. It's not like the coffee was the product that we talked about, it was the economic model that we talked about. The place or business is not really important. It can be coffee, a bookstore, a bakery, a factory, etc. But the cafe also has other advantages. A cafe is a social place, we can talk, have an infoshop. At first there were some books, many magazines, later we moved them here to Sahaf. When it started, 26A in Taksim was about twenty people.

## **The Economic Model.**

**D:** So how does the economic model work?

**H:** At first, at the end of the day, if we had 20-25 Turkish lira, wow, it's great! <sup>(2)</sup> Because there was nobody coming and if they did they just got tea. After one year, we still had other jobs and we were paying the rent and the bills for the cafe that way, etcetera. So the economic model is not getting money for our needs. But we had decided on this particular economic model, one in which it's not important to get more money. Instead, during this process we have met with many people. So after this period our economy is getting better - I'm talking about the money to pay the bills or the rent. And at that point the people who were voluntarily working there didn't get enough money for their needs, but after two years it got better.

But the project is like this. The people volunteer there. For example, Özgür works at Sahaf three days and I work the other 26A two days. The time period we volunteer is based on our suitable times. I am suitable for two days, so I work two days. After a while people offer themselves to be what we call Initiatives <sup>(3)</sup> in 26A and after a while there appeared two groups - people who are always Initiatives, and people who are semi-Initiatives, like "I am coming from Holland and I am coming one month, can I be a volunteer for one month?" Okay. So a volunteer one month. This is the model, but it's still evolving. We haven't decided on this model before this, and we haven't talked about these two kinds of Initiatives.

From the first at 26A in Taksim it's volunteer work and we don't work for money. We are working just for the place itself. People come and we will talk, and it's for this chance that we work. After a while, when we get some more money and we use this for the flyers, posters or other things - it has direct relationship with the movement. So the money we get from Taksim is money for the movement. I'm still working in another workplace to survive.

## **Membership.**

**D:** So how many people in 26A collective now?

**Ö:** One million.

**D:** That's a lot of people.

**H:** Main initiative is twenty-three. Volunteers, two times this. The first number doesn't include the volunteer from Holland, for example.

**D:** Can you explain what a main initiative is? What the difference between a main initiative and a volunteer?

**H:** Main initiatives are changing their life with 26A. One example: last month there was a problem with the water pipe for the toilet and it exploded. It's 3am and Özgür came and solved it with some other initiatives and this is the real issue, the main issue. It is like if it is three o'clock in the night it doesn't matter. But the volunteer initiatives, he or she a student going to university, he or she says "I can come here two times in a week between 12-8 for here". Being a main initiative has more responsibility, and if you accept that you become a main initiative. But it's not just a responsibility for the places, but responsibility for your life, also. The needs for 26A are the needs for us.

**D:** What then, in terms of meeting needs, are the differences? You've told me in the past that if

If you're in need of a shirt 26A gets you a shirt, or a pair of shoes. If I volunteer here one day a week for four hours, what does 26A do for me? Do I get a shirt and shoes?

**H:** Actually, we have answered this question. The needs for me are the needs for him. We talk about *needs*. We come together and we talk. I need this, this, what do you think about this? We decide the needs together. Also the volunteer initiatives, but those who are not the main initiatives, this is not a static place where he or she is. It's the first step for the relationship, to maintain the needs of the collective. After a while we collectively say that these are *our* needs.

There is no formula. No formula for if he or she is a main initiative - this is not just 26A collective - if you just come here for five minutes and you say you have these needs, we will talk and we are anarchists - if we got, we can give. But this is not the real solution. The real solution is to maintain the needs together. To share our lives together. This project is also for sharing our lives. After a while, these people who are not main initiatives, later they became main initiatives. But I'm not talking the ones who are here for one month and "You are so funny, I want to be involved with this collective!" For us it's like..."Okay." (shrug). Sometimes it can be a consumer relationship, you see. Just to taste Turkish anarchist culture. This is not the thing that we want. Taking responsibility means more than that, because we are sharing our lives. But our comrades are coming from Greece, they even got up at 3am and helped Özgür, because after a while this relationship developed. A need for him or her is a need for me. It's all collective. We come together and talk about our needs or not. Capitalism is like a relationship at times, we can face the capitalist instincts of humanity on our own. It is sometimes hard to make an anti-capitalist reflex, but if you're in a relationship that names itself anti-capitalist and anti-hierarchy so it's a way, it all helps.

### **Anti-capitalism.**

**H:** But it was the ideal that 26A works in anti-capitalist way, it is like the individual who come together in this project must be like, "I will get many money and get rich, be a rich person." It's not like that. With 26A Project it's not all depending on one place. When we get enough opportunity, money and other things, it means another 26A, another 26A. Or a group of people say "Okay, 26A we get together and talk about your economic model and it seems good for us and we want to be in this collective," so that's okay for 26A. But as I said it must be anti-capitalistic.

You can ask "How is it anti-capitalistic? In this capitalist system, we are using money, etcetera, etcetera." The money we get from here is not money we use for our luxuries or other things. I got my shoes from here, a need. His shirt came from here. It fulfils real needs but is it has also another purpose. It gives another way that after a while the needs become more connected. The needs he has and I have come together, 'the needs' means 'the needs for us'. So now we are thinking to satisfy our needs together. It was like the starting point of our co-operative.

We have talked this at the first. 26A project we call it "sharing and solidarity co-operative", but it was like a step. Now, recently, we have opportunity to have relationship with producers. It is hard to get from coffee or bookstore to understand the relationship, but in our second year we put some olive oil, some olives, some beans. If you have been there you have seen the beans. Now it is just the first steps of it.

### **Reaching out to primary producers.**

**D:** So you're buying those things directly from the producers? How do you talk to them about that. Do you go to farmers and say "We are an anarchist collective in Istanbul and we want your olives!"

**Ö:** Actually, we don't say "We are anarchists and we want your olives". My father and

grandfather and my relatives are farmers. In Turkey the agriculture economy has been destroyed and for this reason we can have a relationship with these villages. We are thinking we want to go our village and we talk to our relatives, "We are collective and we want to take your products without company, without sellers." And they understand.

**H:** The State, back in the 1980s, they have an economic program to destroy the agriculture economy <sup>(4)</sup>. 50 years ago, the economy depended on 70% agriculture, but after the last fifteen years it is 50-50. The new politics of the state is for the agricultural economy is "You are producer, he is producer, he is producer, I am the big company, I am getting the stuff from all of you and there are other companies, but after a while I am the only company because I give more money to you and I get all the stuff from this village, and after a while you need me and my company. If I don't buy your stuff, you can't live." They say "Dear Producer, give us your stuff for two lira for one kilo," but then the company is selling it for 20 lira. So it is also expensive for the people who live in the cities *and* the rural areas. It is exploitation from two parts - buying it from the producers and selling it to consumers. This kind of capitalist economy is famous in the agricultural areas, so a new way of thinking in economic terms is important, to create a new kind of relationship with the producer is really important now. If this company is getting the stuff for 2 lira, we offer them 5 lira. The company tries to get the better ones, not the other ones, but if it is the stuff like grape it is also useful dry, so we can take the dry ones. We use this - we don't take for selling it. Collective members need this.

**D:** So you're paying them more than the company does, and you're buying it for less than if you bought from Dia <sup>(5)</sup>.

**H:** Yes. Because they're selling it for 20 lira. It was also a chance to talk about another way of economy to the farmers.

**Ö:** This project is a new creation. For this reason we provide just one or two needs for us. Oil or sugar. We are planning to build this up. Actually, you know the Zapatista coffee co-operatives? These are a model for us. And we contact Zapatista co-operatives. We want two more co-ops like this. It's important for us to develop this. We want to take all our oils from our villages. We want to take all our beans. It's important to develop this relationship. And then we think individually 26A needs is not 26A needs. It's the same for us. This is important for us.

**H:** We got some stuff from the producer for here and if you're a member of the collective you can take one can of this, if you need. Or etcetera etcetera. But as he said, these are the first steps of a long term project. On this project it is important to have contact with other collectives, like coffee, etc.

### **"Barricades against capitalism."**

**Ö:** We describe what we call 'barricades'. For our consuming. 26A collective members never drink Coke, never drink Efes Beer <sup>(8)</sup>. We have 'barricades'. For this reason we describe our consumption. For this reason, our individual needs are the same.

**H:** This is really important for us. We come together and talk about what needs are. Capitalism comes to us and say "This is your need, this is your need, this is your need." But we have managed to talk about needs and the term is really important for us, 'barricade'. We are barricading ourselves against capitalism. Like being a vegetarian or a vegan, it exists to cut some links with capitalist system. We are not saying we have no relationship with the capitalist system, but it is also an individual motivation and good to talk about anti-capitalism with the people who visit the cafes and ask "Why do you not sell Coke?" and tell them about the Coca-Cola company in India or other countries <sup>(6)</sup>.

**D:** If 26A doesn't buy coke, it means you guys don't buy Coke. How strong is that? Do you never, ever drink Efes beer, or that you never buy it if the money comes from 26A?

**H:** It is like you said. The barricade is not just 26A's own rules. The barricades we have talked together and the individuals decide. If we talk and decide we don't drink Coke, it means no



individual drinks Coke. Not just our life in 26A. I'm from Izmir. When I'm in Izmir I don't drink Coke. We know that capitalism and state have some relationship, and if we erect barricades to stop this it means more than just no Coke, it's saying "I don't need this".

**Ö:** This is not a 'rule' because we decide all together. We say to people, "We are not drinking Coke" but here we try to socialise lemonade. We make lemonade and try to socialise it. It is natural and we made it, this is not from capitalism. It's is symbolic, but it's important for 26A socialisation.

**H:** Real life has more alternatives. Needs can't be put to us by the companies. Efes beer, or Coke, life has more alternatives. This is what we are behind. "Against police gas, lemon. Against Coke, lemonade." <sup>(7)</sup> This alternative is not far away from the public. My grandmother, my mother, now we do lemonade. We grew up with lemonade, not with Coke. This is the social alternative. In life there are alternatives to capitalism. We are not inventing here, we are emphasising.

## Helping.

**D:** Have you had circumstances where somebody has asked things from 26A and you've decided it's not part of their needs and they got upset? Have you said no to anything?

**Ö:** We never faced this situation. If we faced this situation we'd say no, because you describe helping. If somebody needs something and you give, you're helping. We never help. We believe in solidarity, we describe solidarity. If somebody came here and they said "Give me money, my friend" we would ask "Why?" because this is charity. We believe in sharing and solidarity. They are not same, helping and solidarity.

**H:** If we see people needing solidarity, we can talk and think about this. This is not about the short term, but the long term. You are creating a relationship with someone who needs this, means that we are trying to help build a relationship. He or she has to know you, I have to know him, we have to create a new thing together.

## Finances and living.

**D:** Özgür, you and I talked about your living arrangements. Does 26A make enough money to pay initiative member's rent? Is 26A making enough money where your living situation is taken care of beyond shoes and shirts? How financially successful is 26A?

**Ö:** The 26A situation is not just here at a 26A cafe. The volunteers and initiatives are not just together in 26A, but the volunteers build together everywhere in their life. We make something through this together. We live in common houses and other things and 26A pays for this. But sometimes 26A can't pay my rent and we escape houses.

**H:** Sometimes we don't pay electricity bills, so sometimes we run. To other houses in the collective. 26A is also a relationship, not just in this building, but in the house, an important point of the needs. We eat together if we are here during the day. We have breakfast, lunch, dinner together.

**D:** You have 65 people living together communally amongst your houses. Is that right? Both initiatives and volunteers?

**Ö:** Actually, about 20-30 people, the main initiatives.

**H:** And not all the volunteers, but some of them. It is an evolving relationship. And people are living in their own houses and coming to see this relationship.

**Ö:** 25 people live together. But other people sometimes leave, sometimes come. sometimes just 26A, but 26A makes solidarity with all volunteers.

**D:** I've been meaning to ask - what do you guys do when you disagree with each other?

**Ö:** We have a boxing ring. I have gloves, and we fight it out.

**D:** Like Fight Club? No shirts, no shoes?

**Ö:** Something like this. (laughter) No, we talk it out. We have to. We sit down and we talk about it and discuss it.

## Money in and money out.

**D:** Özgür, you told me you're going to work as a tourist guide. You'll make 250t a day<sup>(1)</sup>. Let's see if I understand it. From 26A Taksim, Kadıköy, Kartal, that all comes in. And your money will come into this, commonly?

**Ö:** You know, I am not working as a guide at the moment. If I work as a tourist guide I will take from this money and I will transfer it to 26A.

**H:** The model is like this. 26A Taksim is it's own economy, 26A Sahaf own economy, 26A Kartal it's own economy. First steps, the people are working in other jobs. If he needs something they give. The other people, they are paying the bills, paying the rent. If he has money, he'll help. If he works as a tourist guide, there's an empty membership of a volunteer at 26A Sahaf here. So that is the relationship.

**D:** So 26A Taksim might have a bill to pay, and Sahaf might say, "Well, Özgür has this job working as a tourist guide, he can maybe give some money to 26A Taksim." Is that the relationship?

**H:** The economic model is not like formalising Özgür's income of 250t a day. It's not a generalisation like this, but if you're talking about a member of this collective working another job and earns money, it's like this.

He's got an amount of money, he's got rent, he's got bills, eats, drinks, etc etc. This amount he has to pay. On the other hand 26A has certain needs and that has to be paid. If he was not from this collective he will think about his own needs and then what he can do for 26A. But the situation is like this - he is not like thinking about own needs, also the others are thinking about the needs of the house and the needs of 26A, too.

The main initiatives are thinking like this: if we work for another job, it is not just for getting money and satisfying our needs. It is just for here, and I mean here is a relationship with our own life. He is in my life, the other members in my life. Not just our friends from collective, he is our comrade, but not in the Soviet way. We are sharing our life. I am responsible for his needs. If he needs an amount of money to pay 26A rent, or this house rent, he needs money to satisfy a need -

**D:** Like a tooth taken out?

**H:** Maybe. Any member who has a job and works for a while, after this while the need is satisfied and it's okay. But it is important for us to not work in this way in the long term because 26A is an economic model. But after a while any member can pay anything. After a while we are talking about things we are paying. Maybe we will find a house to squat, or now we're in a house where we don't pay electricity because we find a way out of that. Also creating some other alternatives. Our needs are changing like this.

**Ö:** Actually, we believe in sharing. The relationship is like this. If 26A Taksim needs something, for example money for rent, they tell us at 26A Sahaf. We meet them and talk about this and if we're okay we give the money to 26A Taksim. I will work as a tourist guide, 26A Taksim is part of it. I believe in all 26A vision.

**D:** So, in a practical sense, it seems like you will still have your bank account, in your name, and when it is needed it's taken out and spent. There's an informal relationship with money, it's not so much about rules but a relationship able to evolve.

**H:** The 26A project has a goal, it is running and changing the lives and is a relationship. But the real aim for us is to create this kind of relationship in a non-capitalist way. This is the more anarchist part of the project. The good thing for us is to share this relationship, this idea, with our neighbours. The bakery near us, or the mechanic far away from here. If we enlarge this relationship with the people in this apartment or this apartment above us, it's really not just important for 26A to pay our rent or to live for our needs, but the more important thing... the

main initiatives think like this: our needs not just 26A needs, but needs for all people who are living. So it is not a closed relationship. That's why we are always talking about it as a relationship not just 26A or the bookstore or other cafes, it's more a relationship.

**Ö:** We want to develop this project. This is not where we are yet, but we want to create with this: we want to build a neighbourhood as anarchist, as a free service. This is part of 26A. We want to try, to maybe enter our neighbourhoods, for example, as an electrician.

**H:** Fix the electrics of the neighbours without money, in a solidarity way. It's just an example. You can also take money from the house you're going and fix, but if you're making this for 26A project, after a while you will know the people living there, so you create another kind of relationship. Sometimes you will say "It's okay, I don't do anything, just change a fuse, not enough for the price." You can evolve the relationship. This is the 26A project, socialise anarchism in a more practical way, mostly with solidarity and sharing relationships, etcetera. There are also some criticisms with this kind of method. Where is the politics in this method, for example, and this is another topic. This is just the 26A project. We are not just members of 26A, and this is another topic of another project.

**D:** So when you do become a tour guide, will it be 26A Tourism?

**Ö:** Actually, we are not thinking anarchism socialises with tourism. Anarchism socialises with baker. It's important, but tourism is not.

**H:** The main thing is to make a relationship in the public more co-operative, to take from producers.

**D:** I guess with tourism it's very hard to do that. Build a community relationship with someone who is in Istanbul for a day.

**HÖ:** Yes.

**H:** We have to say that 26A economic model or project, we made it under the conditions of this geography. We are talking about 26A in Istanbul. It's not just one way, or the only way, it can be another way for other geography. Under these condition, Turkish state, capitalist state in Istanbul is all connected. It is just one wing of the fight.

## Footnotes:

1. Many of the people involved in 26A are also involved in DAF - Devrim Anarşist Faaliyet (Revolutionary Anarchist Action) that responds to economic and political issues in Turkey and internationally, and Meydan Gazetesi a popular monthly anarchist newspaper, and LAF - Lise Anarşist Faaliyet (High School Anarchist Action).

Websites:

<http://meydangazetesi.org/>

<http://anarsistfaaliyet.org/kategori/english/>

<http://lafisyanda.org/>

<http://kolektif26a.org/26A/>

2. In 2012 the minimum wage was 740t *per month*. The average wage in Turkey is around 75t a day. An unskilled labourer can earn as little as 2-3t an hour in the hand, working a ten hour day six days a week.

See:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_in\\_Europe\\_by\\_monthly\\_average\\_wage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_in_Europe_by_monthly_average_wage)

<http://www.turkishliving.com/forums/fethiye-forum/59899-minimum-wage-turkey.html>

3. The term *initiative* is used as a noun taken from the term *taking initiative*, emphasising effort, experimentation and willingness.

4. According to the readily available English language resources, Turkey's agricultural sector now accounts for less than 15% of the GDP, whereas in 1980 it accounted for almost 60%, rather than the 50-50 mentioned here. Hüseyin's figure may refer to agriculture overall, including processed and packaged foods and food products and by-products, not just primary produce, however. (The other major contributions to Turkey's GDP comes from tourism, manufacture of electronic products and manufacture of industrial equipment and vehicles.)

See: <http://countrystudies.us/turkey/56.htm>

5. Dia is a near-ubiquitous Turkish supermarket chain at the time of writing owned by Turkish industrial and commercial powerhouse Sabancı Corporation. (Sabancı has been rumoured to contributed around 5% of Turkey's overall economy.)

6. Coca-Cola India has taken the blame for water shortages and groundwater and soil contamination in the regions surrounding it's bottling plants.

Wikipedia keywords: Criticism of Coca-Cola.

7. Lemon is a home remedy antidote for CS-type tear gas. Stomach antacid also works well, and milk, too, in a pinch. Apply liberally to the eyes, nose and mouth.

8. Efes Beverage Group has an astounding 82% market share of beer in Turkey and is the largest shareholder in the Coca-Cola franchise to boot and it is the sixth largest retailer of brewed beer in Europe. If you drink Miller, Becks or Fosters in Turkey you're buying from Efes, and because it owns Coke too, if you drink Coke, Sprite, Fuse ice tea or even Cappy Juice you're also drinking Efes.



*The interior of 26A Sahaf, August 2013, with books and clothesline zine display.*



*The exterior of 26A Taksim, August 2013. polis stasyon ten metres to the right.*



*The exterior of 26A Sahaf before opening, August 2013. Author's favourite table pictured right.*



*The bean supply at 26A Taksim, featuring the Kolektif's farm-direct produce.*

## Interview with Özlem of *Anarşist Kadınlar*, 20th of August, 2013

**D:** I was talking to Özgür the other day and he said you don't refer to yourselves as anarchist-feminists.

**Ö:** Just anarchists, not feminists. Feminism is something that has a position against the other gender. Post-feminist is something a little bit different, but looking at the tradition, the history, feminism needs two genders, one masculine and one feminine. The masculine should be the oppressor, the feminine should be oppressed. When we use feminist, it's something that defines itself from the opposite. We don't think like this, we know that the masculine is also oppressed by the patriarchy. So it is the freedom of woman will maybe free the man, so it's not something in opposite positions, they are not against each other. When we talk about feminism, it's more about making sacred the woman, the man is something like the oppressor. We don't think like this, we define the woman's struggle from within itself.

**D:** How do you refer to yourselves?

**Ö:** Anarchist women. <sup>(1)</sup>

**D:** How did you become an anarchist woman?

**Ö:** For a woman it's inescapable to survive if you're not organised, if you don't come together. When we are discussing about being a woman, woman is created by the gender roles, you have to be competitive. The culture teaches you this. You have to be thinking about yourself, you have to be selfish, you have to be careful about the things around you, yourself. This perception makes the woman isolated from society. The establishing of woman creates a creature who is very fragile, open to any danger. While we are being raised, while we are becoming a woman from a girl, we are always taught all of this. Women don't know how to play football, or to play games together. They are always raised by themselves. We don't have so many chances to be social in society. We are always secure in our houses, protected by fathers and husbands. So it's very urgent, critical for us to organise. We have to create this social areas that we can express ourselves. To create spaces where we are not lonely any more. As anarchists we know that we need each other, as people. Women are in a worse position than men. They don't have a lot of chance to come together. This was the reason why the ideas come up. The most critical necessity is to come together as women.

**D:** Society teaches you to be competitive - do you mean as women against other women?

**Ö:** This is one point - the woman is competitive because she needs to be the most beautiful, competing with other women. Other than this, of course, capitalist society wants everyone to be competitive, to be the most powerful in order to survive. Both as anarchists and as anti-capitalists, we must be against this competitive perception of life.

**D:** One of the things I noticed most here is that the masculine role in society is extremely pronounced. Patriarchy is much more outwardly and openly accepted, and patriarchy is an entrenched part of Turkish society. How do you see the life and struggle of an anarchist woman here compared to European anarchist women or American anarchist women? Do you think there are unique things about Turkish culture that make it qualitatively different?

**Ö:** When we think internationally we don't have so many differences in terms of being women. Women are raped in other countries, they are faced with sexual assault, they are being killed by men, so it's not very different. Maybe in specifics in Turkey it's a more feudal country. Turkey has only just been capitalised. After Turgut Özal <sup>(2)</sup> opened the country to imperialist powers of capitalist companies, in 20-30 years this country is open to the capitalist way of production and consumption. It's a new thing for us. Before it was more like a feudal organisational ways of life. Thirty years ago, there were big families. One ruler for the region, one owner of the village who has many wives and children. This culture has its own traditions. It has *töre* the teachings of the culture. In this *töre*, a woman who is raped is killed by the father, brother, uncle. This culture of *töre* is very strong still. The country has not been so capitalised. I don't

know which is better. We come from this feudal rule and have these traditional teachings, but in the other scene we see in the capitalist life, women are imprisoned in the 34 size. Now here in Turkey the woman seem to to be oppressed by headscarf or the black cover like the burqa, but we know that in Europe women in their mind they have the perception of capitalism. They have the feeling in their soul, that they have to consume the products of capitalism, the makeup, wearing brands. I don't know which is worse.

**D:** Women as commodity?

**Ö:** I don't think the old way and the new way are very different from each other. In the feudal system nobody said the woman was a commodity, but she was already a possession of the man, so you don't have to call it a commodity, but we know in the new capitalist society the woman is both the commodity and the commodity is for the woman. In advertisements, a beautiful woman is telling other women to buy products. The commodity is "woman" and the target is women. We are stuck in both sides.

**D:** The gender role of a woman becomes the commodity, and that in turn is sold to women.

**Ö:** When we think about that, in capitalism, woman can be talked about as a producer, a consumer and a commodity. In these three ways we have been exploited - if we produce, it doesn't matter if we produce at home as "ghost labour" - unseen work - or in a capitalist company, or if you are working out, you have to be careful of sexual harassment and this kind of treatment. You are faced with this as a producer. As a consumer you are the one the capitalist advertisements are always targeting. You are the one who is shopping for the house, so you're under constant attack by detergent advertisements, food advertisements, any product for the house is targeted directly at the woman, which is recreating the gender role again and again. Also you are a commodity because in the advertisements both women and men see a woman selling or telling them to buy.

**D:** What sort of response do you have to bring to the general public? 26A, for example, tries to exist *in* society. It seems that it could be a very difficult task to bring an anti-capitalist response to women in Turkey because the patriarchal role is so dominant here. How do you take this to the public?

**Ö:** Yes, it's not so easy. Even the women in the struggle as anarchist women, even today we still question how we get rid of patriarchal teachings in our mind. We have to free ourselves, we have to go away from these perceptions in our mind that women is this and man is this. So when we think about this society, how the anarchist women are targeting or show themselves and to organise, we have ways we have just started. We have basic, easy ways to touch the people.

As an action we distribute food on the street. We still have the slogan, "Neither to the public or to the kitchen but the women to the street." We don't have the position of the woman in the kitchen but still we cook for people because people should cook for each other. So we cook and hand out food in some periodical actions. We have the chance to talk with the people and tell why we have to share our food and cook for all. This is a small attempt, a symbolic action. Maybe we give food to five hundred or a thousand, but it's not so much. We are living in a city which is 12 million, so this is a small attempt, of course. But this is what we do for one week or one day. For the other days of the year we are still working and thinking how to make it.

The most recently planned thing in our mind is to find a way to produce and distribute from producer to consumer without making any profit on this, establishing a co-operative and be a women's co-operative. We talked a while and said woman as a producer, as a consumer is more exploited. Twice over. We have to think about this, and we have to create this co-operative for woman. Women who are producing in their homes don't see their labour, it isn't paid, they don't have economical freedom. they don't have their own money. They are dependent on their father, or their husband or sons. So we have to find a gap, create a space for woman, in which



they can produce for themselves. Our long-term project is a co-operative project, we are now working on the infrastructure of the co-operative now. It isn't easy to create an anti-capitalist, anarchist co-operative. We have some examples in Spain, or some examples in Russia, or in Italy, but we have to make our own, create our own theory and our conditions are going to be affecting the project. Now we read on anarchist economics and we criticise what we read, compare, contrast and have long discussions about it. We are going to create a space, a co-operative building, open to all women, they don't have to be anarchist woman. It will be open to every woman, but have some principles. Containing no racist words, no sexist words, organising in an anti-authoritarian way. We have some principles like this, but we don't call this an anarchist co-operative. So this is another way to touch society, touch their lives. If we manage to reach a woman who is not able to run her own economy, and if we manage to do this with the co-operative, we're able to touch her family. Her child, her husband. This is important, it means you have this family out of capitalism and by your side. This is important to socialise anarchist ideas in society, not just to free the woman, but to help these ideas of anarchism in society - because the woman is still responsible for raising the children.

**D:** What industry are you planning to focus on?

**Ö:** We have food production. Conserved food, marmalades and jam, at first, which on the long term are not rotting. Or beans, dried food. The first plan is for food because it's necessary to survive. The second is for clothes, but not one of us knows good sewing, so we need to learn this and we need people who are willing to teach, so this project will wait for one who is going to take this and carry it.

But the food project, in one week from now, on the weekend we're going to go to our village in Bursa and we're going to pick up some tomatoes and make conserved tomato jam. We will prepare 300-400 bottles of tomato. This is not much, but for a start this is going to be a start for the families of our comrades, our friends, who are we are in relations with. So when she brings this conserved tomato to her house they're going to talk about who made this and what the aim for this is. It's a way to touch the people's lives. So it's not so much for a start.

**D:** Will that be similar economic model to what 26A uses? Will the goods just go to those who produce it, or will you be selling it retail?

**Ö:** We will be selling it to the public, for this start we won't be producing enough to sell. Just produce for our winter needs. So the project at the start is not to sell. But something like 26A, let me tell you what it looks like.

We're going to take from the producer, and without profit give these conserves to 26A. 26A is going to be responsible for the products on the shelves and we're going to be paid by 26A, or some other co-operatives or collectives. We can also get in touch with individual people, or in the long term have our own shop which is full of the products of the co-operative. But at first, the common point between 26A and the co-operative will be to have the space for the co-operatives products. Something like this.

**D:** There are women who exist in Turkish history who stepped outside traditional gender roles of women. How do anarchist women relate to those historical figures?

**Ö:** We have Tansu Çiller, who was Prime Minister during the Turgut Özal period, who was responsible for Turkey being capitalised and opened the way for companies. Çiller was PM at this time. This woman was remembered in a sensational, scandalous events because at this time there was a car accident in which there was the manager of the police department, a head of mafia, another member of the parliament all together in the same car, so there was a strong relations between mafia and state. At this time she was PM and it was really obvious, this big scandal. She's remembered for this. <sup>(3)</sup>

If we look at this time we can say that she's not really a woman. In Turkey she's the first PM

who is a woman, but when you look at the caricatures of the period, when she does something bad, when she does something not right in the eyes of society, she's in the bed like a woman with big breasts, with many men in the bed. This means she's a woman. She cannot do this, be Prime Minister, she's a whore. Something like this is the undermessage of this. If she does something good, the caricature is a soldier with a uniform, standing straight, looking for the future, like this. In order to tell something positive she's being masculinised. To be criticised she is feminised. This is what I mean that she is not a woman. We have an analysis of this, woman becoming man. In capitalist society many women are becoming men. For example, a woman who earns a lot of money, hires another woman to clean her house. This woman is not a woman any more, she pays another woman to do her work.

Sabiha Gökçen is also not a woman. When we define a woman, she is the oppressed one. When we talk about Gökçen she is not on the side of the oppressed. She is responsible for genocide <sup>(4)</sup> and is a very strong figure in the nationalist perception, a fascist. It's not correct to say that she's a leading woman figure in Turkey, she is also very hated by Kurdish people, Alevitian people. She is not a strong figure as a woman. She's a strong woman as a fascist, we can say.

**D:** It seems like capitalism and the right have strong female figures, but that anarchism and the left do not.

**Ö:** No, we have. In Turkey are a lot, a lot of women revolutionaries and women martyrs. The woman in Turkey in the left and anarchist struggles are really believing in the struggle and willing to give everything. In the PKK <sup>(5)</sup>, in the seventies, the eighties, the nineties, there are a lot of songs for women martyrs, there are many Kurdish women in the PKK that I cannot count the names. There are many women who died in the hunger strikes in the nineties. In Turkey the oppressed position of woman who believes in the struggle a lot, a courageous and believing woman. The founder of PKK, Öcalan, he's very focused on the women's struggle. He knows it's the Kurdish people's movement and the mothers are raising the people. He's aware that if he wins the women, if they're in the struggle, the rest will follow.

We can talk about the Saturday Mothers. It's the longest running action in Turkey at the moment - more than 400 weeks - like the mothers in Argentina <sup>(6)</sup>. They are waiting on Istiklal St in front of Galatasaray High School for their sons who are killed by the State and whose bodies have not been found, or if their bodies have been found their murderers have not. So they are waiting every Saturday for their sons or husbands. They are mostly Kurdish. They are really strong in this perception of struggle.

In PKK we know many of the women take the gun. Öcalan has a strong focus on woman, he has many teachings and texts sanctifying woman. He says women are powerful, praising women. This is important. another point is that the women in Kurdistan have been raped by soldiers, killed and their children are being killed by the Turkish army, so they have no chance but to fight against. Which is another reason for the Kurdish woman to fight against. This is not the same as a woman becoming a man. They are still in the PKK struggle, but still have their own woman identity. Öcalan is very focused on woman and he has very strong theories combining woman and nature, eco-feminism, genealogy and is very focused on these topics. In the Kurdish struggle there is a strong focus of this in theory and in practice because they face with the war.

**D:** Does that have very much impact in mainstream, western Turkish society?

**Ö:** No. This is not seen by the media - even opposite propaganda is not made. Nobody who really thinks about or knows about what happens in the east knows women are fighting against the Turkish army. Nobody but the social opposition, the mainstream doesn't know about that.

**D:** Somebody told me that the PKK was running workshops where men had to do traditional women's work - men had to do the cooking, the cleaning, the housework, unpaid while the women were allowed to do what they want, as a way to educate men on what life as woman is

like. It seems a very Marxist auto-critique program.

**Ö:** I had never heard that, but I know in the mountains <sup>(7)</sup> there is no difference between men and women - the man also makes bread, for example. But being a woman is making some things more difficult. I know that for a woman, having long hair is something to be made fun of, in PKK. There are some jokes about being a woman, having breasts, that kind of thing. Still gender roles are in their minds. We also know that these people are dealing with this still.

The hunger strikes in the nineties were against the F-type prisons in Turkey, but rather they were big rooms with many beds up and down, crowded rooms and these people in prisons had their own communities in the prisons. But when they realised these rooms go on making teachings against the State, or going on writing and discussing, so the government agrees to make another type of prison where there are only three people in one cell and many limitations - you cannot grow any flowers, put aside any food, you cannot do anything, everything is limited, everything is illegal in the F-type prison. These types are designed for political prisoners, not for burglars and thieves, they are especially designed for political prisoners. When it was announced that F-type prisons were coming, big reactions for this. Maybe of the leftist groups, many leftist people reacted, many reactions out of the prisons, also. The government were insisting on making this F-type prison, when they started many people in the prisons started a hunger strike. This lasted for a long time, I think the longest was 1 1/2 year. There were hundreds of people leaving their bodies for that, eating nothing. The government didn't do anything with F-type prisons, and many people died of hunger, and many people died because after the deaths started, the government interrupted the hunger strikes. The government had the attack to the prisons while people were on hunger strike, they attacked with soldiers, with guns, and in some prisoners they burned fire. In some prisons, people inside burned fire. There were many dead after this operation. After this operation they took many people who were on hunger strike and gave them food by force, which also lead to many deaths. Many people suffered from Wernicke-Korsakoff <sup>(8)</sup> which is an illness linked with hunger strikes. It is related from a lack of food and B1, they cannot see well and can't walk well, they have problems of balance and can't remember. So this attack is a big turning point in Turkish history.

Maybe half were women. Many women died, (including) Canan Kulaksiz and Zehra Kuleksiz, they are sisters, they died in the hunger strikes. There are many memorials for them. The most powerful organisation in these hunger strikes were the DHKP-C, <sup>(9)</sup> this was the longest and before this there was one in Diyarbakir after the military putsch in the eighties <sup>(10)</sup> and after there was for the mother language and the freedom of Öcalan. Many prisoners were of PKK and after 60 days or 70 days Öcalan called them to not continue. <sup>(11)</sup>

**D:** How are gender roles dealt with in the anarchist movement in Turkey?

**Ö:** You know the Spanish women's organisation, *Mujeres Libres*? <sup>(12)</sup> They fought in the war, in the revolution, they take up guns. We are very inspired by this organisation. They say "we are anarchists, but we are women". It is important to come together as anarchist women. We have to fight with patriarchy with every moment of our lives. In the anarchist struggle, we are always careful being anti-sexist, being anti-racist, we care about the language we use, but we realise we are not pure, we're not perfect anarchist people. We still have many things to get over. We know our comrades are willing to fight with the patriarchy in their mind, there is nothing like the gender roles, we are trying to break out of genders roles in our community. The men are washing the dishes and cooking for woman, in the opposite way, you know? But still we have to be organised as anarchist woman, because anything we're sensitive of cannot be realised by a comrade that is not a woman.

What we are really sensitive with the language, where we are sensitive about the gender roles, sometimes doesn't have the same sensitivity in the eyes of the men. So in order to make this relation in an anti-authoritarian way, in a non-patriarchal way, we have to organise as anarchist

women. In order to be careful about their way of thinking.

For example, *namus* means in Turkish, like your country is your *namus*. your daughter is your *namus*. It is something related with, something to be protected. If you are *namuslar*, your wife is in your house and serving just husband then she is having *namus*. But if you go on the street and wander around you are *namusis*. It's explained by woman, related with being a woman, being protected. Has a strong relation with this. Something about being a girl, not the tiny thing that no longer exist with when you become a woman. If you are a girl, you have your *namus*, but if you are married you don't have this tiny thing in your vagina. You are *namusis*. It is not a physical thing, it is a concept.

One comrade, he was in an action, taking photos of *sivil polis* and they want to take his camera. He fights back and takes his camera and runs away. In the night he's telling the story, "They wanted to take my camera and my camera is my *namus*." There was silence. He said not the right word. He was aware of what he said. It's not a swear word in society, but for us who are rejecting the role of woman being protected and rejecting the gender roles and rejecting the concept of *namus*, when he said this we were really aware, the women, because we were sensitive. He was aware when we were silent and staring at him and he realised what he'd said. Then he said "I didn't mean that," and wanted to make it up, to show he was aware of what he said. This is a tiny example.

Another example. One day it was my off day, I was not working in the collective. I woke up early and prepared the breakfast, and when the comrades went to the cafes to work and some went for ordinary routine day's work, some stayed in the house and I was with them. After breakfast I was washing the clothes and I put the clothes on the ropes to dry, and after I prepared food for lunch, and I put another clothes in the machine and folded the ones that were dry and put in the cupboards. After lunch I find myself washing the dishes and I went crazy - why are all these men sitting and talking politics while I'm making the tea? So when I was going crazy they were aware of what had been happening and we started a discussion. We had a way to evaluate the situation, for example, if this had been a man who had prepared the breakfast, done the dishes, washed the clothes, dried the clothes, folded the clothes, doesn't he have a right to rebel? This is something, an issue of a long discussion and we had a chance to make this discussion, and this is the small ways we confront with being man or woman in our community. But still we have the chance to discuss about it.

**D:** What kind of approach do anarchists here take towards sex? Turkish society seems not the most sexually liberated society in the world, and within the women's movement in the west in the 60's and 70's sexual liberation was held to be extremely important. How do you see that in Turkey now? Are women more or less sexually liberated now, how has capitalism influenced that, has westernisation influenced that and how does that relate to male and female anarchists?

**Ö:** I have a not-so-long answer. For me, I don't think women are not sexually liberated, but we cannot say liberated. We can say that a young woman can have sexual relations in their life at an early age, which we can express as liberated, but I don't choose to say that. I don't think that's liberation because of the strong propaganda of capitalism, this young woman feels this necessity to be owned by a man, to explore their sexuality, to have sexual relations. But all these relationships end in a consuming relationship. So sexual liberation, I cannot say. But after the capitalisation of the society in the 90s, after TV propaganda, programs, etc, we know that many young girls have been exploring their sexuality in their early years and some of them are pregnant and some of them are killed by fathers and brothers, but I don't know if we can say sexually liberated, but sexually exploited by capitalism I can say.

For my community, anarchist women, we are more conservative. Of course, we discuss about free love and having non-monogamous relations. We have a point, a common point, where we

say if there is no love, there can be no free love. While discussing the non-monogamous relations, we discuss about the possession relations, being jealous of each other, ego, the competition of each other. This leads to very deep discussions in our community. But there is a big risk of capitalism to get in these relations and to manipulate these non-monogamous relations, because in this capitalist society it's not easy to develop non-monogamous relations when there are still strong possession relations and strong exploitation relations. This makes it difficult to live real non-monogamous relations. So, we accept the concept and the reality of the point of non-monogamous relations, but still we are very careful about living this sexuality freely, because sexually free doesn't mean sexually liberated. I cannot say a general thing about this - I think every case should be discussed in her own.

**D:** Do you think Islam's polygamous tradition influences the way people here view non-monogamous relationships?

**Ö:** When you talk about the non-monogamous relations of Islam it's something difficult to discuss. There we can say that the solidarity of two women against the authority of one man. It's a very complicated issue, we cannot say that one man has many women under his possession. It's not just that. We also see these women caring about each other, rather than competition - although, of course there are many examples to the contrary - these women choose to move together, to decide together, raise children together, to do housework together. It's a larger discussion, I think.

**D:** So you see these relationships as less atomised than women under capitalism? Under capitalism women are separated and driven to compete, whereas in these examples it seems to be doing something different.

**Ö:** It's another topic of discussion, I think, the perception of polygamy in Islam, I think. I'm not sure which to criticise (more), but there is a relationship between the polygamous relationships of Islam with the monogamous relations with the Turkish republic. To create a new government, a new country, with a new perception you have to get rid of the past scars. This Turkish republic says it doesn't have any relation with religion, so it has to abolish this polygamous relations. So this is the recreation of the culture, I think. One is affected from the other, but this is rejecting, something like a dialectic, rejecting the past and grabbing the new, more European and modern one. <sup>(13)</sup>

**D:** Do you see queer politics having an influence on how women define themselves in Turkey?

**Ö:** (*Tch*). I'm not really having a common point with queer theory. When we read the queer theory we have a criticism of queer theory because we have to define the gender roles in order to refuse them. When we see the queer theory saying that women should reject the role of being women and just be themselves, it's not very easy to separate these from each other, that this is roles of culture and society taught us and this is woman, what we are. It's not something to be separated so easily. If we put these gender roles aside and try to find another role for ourselves, we have this risk of becoming men. If we don't criticise the roles in society, if we don't care about, focus on the oppressing and oppressed ones, if we separate them from each other, we have to be careful about this, if we put this aside, we can take it on. While we are getting rid of one we can have another take it's place. It's a very critical point, we have this risk a lot. We have ordinary, established roles in this society, and we don't have a deep analysis and criticism of these roles, which we are taught, which we accept, which is the gender role of men, which is the gender role of women, if we don't have a strong criticism of this we cannot create the other one. If we put this aside, we can take on the other one.

**D:** You feel that if you don't analyse the role of oppressor and oppressed you will still have a society of oppressors, rather than a society with those roles removed.

**Ö:** Yes. While rejecting the role of man, the oppressor can take the role of woman, like to be protected and to be cared of. This is a risk. Queer theory has this risk in her own. On the other hand, it is very difficult to create this society without being marginalised. In Turkish society we

don't have the conditions for 'being queer'. This condition is very linked very strongly to the position of the other. "I reject your position and what I do is react and what I do is reactive." Why we don't call ourselves feminists is why we don't call ourselves queer, because we don't an oppositional relationship. In order to get rid of this perception, of having two sides, we have to create a non-gendered community, but while we are creating that non-gendered community we have to create all the genders again and again. We have to analyse the roles of society, what are the gender roles and where we stand now.

As a reaction action, we don't choose to be queer. The society is very far from this idea, you cannot express yourself as queer. It's too hard to explain. Even if you're not queer you can talk about non-gendered community.

**D:** Before you said that queer theory says that gendered roles be left alone and people can do what they want. What I was wondering, do you see queer theory as being quite individualist and less communitarian?

**Ö:** Yes, we can say this. I was not meaning this, but what you have touched now is one of the points I was trying to tell about. What queer theory proposes, something is rooted for the action of the individual, has a gap between the society and the individual, which makes things difficult for queer theory.

**D:** You're saying that not being able to express yourself as queer here, you mean it requires social positions so far from Turkish society and social structure it becomes a meaningless way to relate to others?

**Ö:** Yes, something like this. I can add something else. We in Turkey, we put a lot of importance on saying we're anarchist. It has the same meaning with being a terrorist. After the 80s, every opposition is named a terrorist or an anarchist. In order to be marginalised, it was the state's policy to call any bombing or attack on the State as anarchist. So anarchism lost it's meaning in Turkey. That's why we put a lot of importance on saying we're anarchists, to break this concept of anarchism. So when people say "Why do you call yourselves anarchist? Couldn't you find a better name for yourselves? You are good people, why do you say yourselves as anarchists." and when we start saying anarchism is something good, something is broken in their mind. We take back the meaning of anarchism, we transform it into the concept we want to. When using 'queer' you have to use this concept of queer which has this meaning of negative in itself, using this term to define yourself, this is something as inexplorable. When you say it's a woman's struggle, fighting for a woman, it means to take back the meaning of woman, as women are oppressed. We have to fight for the name of woman. That's another point in our struggle. And when we say woman, we don't just mean people who are physically woman, the biological man but woman feeling people are in the women's struggle. The biological woman who chooses to be a man is also in the woman's struggle, has the experience of being a woman. So this is why we call ourselves not queer, but woman.

**D:** Anything you want to say?

**Ö:** I want the people in Australia to work for this struggle, do draw this struggle in their place. What I can say, when I was asked to add anything, I say this always. This an ordinary message I tell to everyone. This is what my will is.

If the struggle in Australia, Europe, Athens, Thessalonika, Genoa grows, my struggle is growing. This is important to be serious about my struggle, act what you believe, this is what fertilises the struggle. You have to dream and you act what you dream of, because freedom is something like this. We define freedom like this. To dream and act what you dream. To be courageous is not something we do without being afraid of anything, it's something we afraid of but we still do. While we define concepts like this, being an anarchists is having the responsibility of your life, if you want to do something, if you want to act, if you want to have another society that is anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian , without state, you have to work for it.

Whatever happens, you have to work for it. Even if you cannot manage it, you have tried this and this means something. Revolution is not a coming future for us, it is a daily reconstruction of our lives. If you wake up with the question of "What revolution am I going to do today?" then you start some point. You break the relations of selfishness, you question your ego and get rid of your egoness, analyse the people's relations with authority, you interrupt and destroy authority in these relations. This is not something to just attack the banks. This is not something to make demonstrations on the street, shout out slogans. Of course these are important, but while talking about the daily reconstructions of our lives, the daily revolutions in our lives, we have to be careful about each other. Anarchism is something like brotherhood, sisterhood, we have to care about each other. We have to develop a feeling of justice and we have to feed this feeling of brotherhood because the State and the power, authority the capitalism, always doing the opposite. They are trying to separate us from each other, to atomise us, make us lonely and powerless. If they manage to separate us, if they manage to have this perception of competition in our minds against everyone around us, then we are always defenceless and alone in an all-enemy, coward world. They want us to think like this. We have to get rid of this idea, and start creating strong, sincere, community relationship through our lives. That's the way we can grow our struggle in our lives and make the revolution in our lives. When we do this, our lives have a meaning. because in our lives we have been able to make it something. Put barricades to capitalism, not to enter our relationships. And we have to work to move these barricades forward every day.

## Footnotes

1. In Turkish, *Anarşist Kadınlar*

2. Turgut Özal was Prime Minister and later President of Turkey who revolutionised the Turkish economy and opened it to capitalist trade and foreign investment.

3. The affair was referred to as the *Susurluk scandal* and exposed the relationships between criminality, business and government in Turkey, including co-operation between ostensibly virulently opposed Nationalist and Kurdish groups.

4. Sabiha Gökçen was the world's first female combat pilot. The adopted daughter of founding father of the Republic of Turkey, Kemal Atatürk, Gökçen took part in Dersim Rebellion, fighting for the Turkish Republic against the previously self-administered Alevi Kurds and Zaza people. The rebellion led to 13,000 civilian deaths according to official sources, perhaps as many as 70,000 according to Kurdish sources. In 2011, the government of Turkey officially apologised for the Dersim killings. Istanbul's second international airport is named after Gökçen.

5. The PKK is the *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* or Kurdistan Worker's Party, founded in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan. A Marxist revolutionary group, the PKK has been engaged in guerilla warfare with the Turkish state since 1984, and seeks to found an independent socialist state for Kurds. More recently it has been focussing on regional autonomy within the state itself and has entered negotiations with the Turkish government about a withdrawal into Iraqi Kurdistan. Öcalan himself has been in prison since 1999.

6. *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo* or Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo protested the disappearance of Argentinian men from who were kidnapped, murdered or otherwise 'disappeared' during the Argentinian military dictatorship of 1976-1983. From 1977 to 2006, the group protested weekly in front of the Presidential palace in Buenos Aires. Several of the leading Mothers themselves were kidnapped and murdered by the regime.

7. In Turkish, the phrase "to go to the mountains" is a euphemism for becoming a guerilla fighter or a bandit. So when one speaks of 'being in the mountain' in this context, it refers to the act of being a revolutionary soldier, something akin to a combination of 'gone underground' and 'at the barricade' in English.

8. Wernicke–Korsakoff syndrome is caused by a deficiency of B1, the symptoms of which include beriberi (the group of symptoms caused by severe B1 deficiency) and a neurological disorder that causes weight loss, disturbed vision, muscle weakness and severe amnesia, apathy and loss of insight. It is most often found in alcoholics, but also occurs frequently in hunger strikers or the severely malnourished.

9. The *Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi* (Revolutionary People's Liberation Party–Front) are a Marxist-Leninist group who have taken responsibility, under various names, for multiple assassinations and suicide bombings in Turkey since their formation in 1978, including the killing of a senior family member of the Sabancı industrial empire. Since the government negotiations with the PKK began, the DHKP-C have borne the brunt of terrorist scare tactics from the Turkish government and media. Three days after I arrived in Turkey a suicide bomber killed himself and a security guard at the US embassy in Ankara. I happened to be watching CNNTurk at the time the attack happened, and the news outlet named the bomber and his membership to DHKP-C literally within two or three minutes of the blast, before the death toll or the identity of the security guard could be confirmed or a camera crew could even be dispatched to the site. The final death toll and the identity of the security guard took almost 24 hours to confirm. (The same CNNTurk would inspire the 'angry penguin' mascot for the 'direngazi' uprising in May and



June after the station played a penguin documentary on orders of the Turkish government to ignore the violent police attacks on protestors happening a short distance from the centre of Istanbul.) In 2011 a high school teacher and a student were jailed for six years for protesting with cardboard signs supporting greater democracy in high schools, on the justification that they were acting on behalf of the DHKP-C, but were not actually members. Despite being an outlawed terrorist organisation for which members can be jailed almost indefinitely, the Turkish intelligence service claims to know the names, addresses, education history, literacy levels, employment details, but, inexplicably, haven't arrested them.

10. Turkey experienced a third Kemalist military coup in September 1980, where a group of generals overthrew the government to place a Atatürk-style martial law over the country, ending ongoing parliamentary instability and frequent violent conflict. In order to stabilise the country, the military imprisoned more than half a million people and executed more than fifty, with hundreds dying in prison. The martial law period lasted three years.

11. In 2012, more than 1,700 prisoners went on hunger strike to demand the right for Kurds to be taught their own language, for improved prison conditions and for Öcalan to be freed from prison. It ended after nine weeks and more than 10,000 total participants involved, both in and out of prison.

12. *Mujeres Libres* (Free Women) were a group of anarchists in Spain during the revolution. The group had over 30,000 members and was focussed on dual liberation, for women's rights and for an anarchist society, fighting sexism within the anarchist movement while working towards social liberation.

See: Martha A. Acklesberg's *Free women of Spain*, published by AK Press in 2004.

13. From 1922 onwards the new Turkish state, under the guiding vision of Gallipoli commander and revolutionary leader Kemal Atatürk, sought to modernise the old Ottoman Empire into a secular, literate, industrialised, democratic Nation-State. Islamic traditions were no longer permitted as part of law, previously united mosque and state were separated, the Sultanate was abolished and the Turkish language was revised and reconstructed to be easier to learn and more consistent. This process was protected by counter-revolutionary laws against criticising Atatürk or the Republic that apply to this day.





*Ekmek, adalet, özgürlük!* (Turkish for 'Bread, justice, freedom!') contains two interviews with Turkish anarchists.

The first is with members of the anarchist-communist group Kolektif 26A, who have operated an anti-capitalist commune in Istanbul for five years, working and living together while pushing back the state and capital and socialising the concepts of anarchism.

The second discusses the struggle of anarchist women in Turkey, arguably the most patriarchal state on the European continent, and the efforts to claim equality against active state oppression and misogynistic custom and tradition and to build a movement that is simultaneously anti-gender hierarchy and anti-capitalist yet inclusive and communitarian.

*Ekmek, adalet, özgürlük!* is both an introduction to the praxis of anarchism in Turkey and a discussion of the complexities being grappled with outside the Western sphere of anarchism.

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