

BOOK REVIEWS

Prison Writings III: The Road Map to Negotiations, by Abdullah Öcalan. Trans. by Havin Guneser and originally entitled in translation *Problems of Democratization in Turkey and Solution Models in Kurdistan (Road Map)*. Cologne, Germany: International Initiative Edition, 2012. 115 pages. 10 pounds, paperback; 20 pounds, hardback.

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As the Turkish government's much-heralded "Kurdish Opening" was faltering in 2009, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) insurgency became rekindled amid mutual recriminations. By April 2012, more than 7,000 nonviolent Kurdish activists — including 45 lawyers for incarcerated PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan — have been imprisoned for what many call "thought crime" or guilt by association. They nonviolently have expressed pro-Kurdish positions that are also supported by the illegal Komo Civaken Kurdistan (Kurdistan Communities Union, KCK), the umbrella organization that now supposedly subsumes the PKK. Many Kurds and their supporters excoriated the Turkish government for these arrests and the ensuing crackdown. On the other hand, what government would not seek to ban an alternative governmental structure that an insurgency group was attempting to establish on its territory?

The tightly drawn book, *Prison Writings III*, presents Abdullah Öcalan's position on all this. He also presents the so-called road map for Kurdish rights and peace within Turkey that he was secretly bargaining over with the Turkish government. These contacts were broken off and low-grade fighting was resumed following the latest electoral triumph of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party, AKP), on June 12, 2011. In February 2012, it was revealed that, simultaneously with the Öcalan negotiations, Hakan Fidan, director of the Turkish National Intelligence Agency (MIT), had also been negotiating with other senior leaders of the PKK in Oslo.

In this present volume, Öcalan spends a considerable amount of time defining specific theoretical principles he uses in his over-all presentation. Democratization "denotes the safeguarding of freedoms of speech and association, as well as the rights of individuals of all social strata — be they a minority or a majority, and regardless of language, religion, ethnicity and nationality — against the state" (p. 20). This, of course, is what is commonly referred to as civil liberties in the United States and human rights in international law.

In addition, the book briefly includes Öcalan's interpretation of world history and in much greater detail his understanding of the relationship between Turks and Kurds. "The Kurds were an essential and fundamental factor in the founding of the [Turkish] republic and in the Independence War, yet they now find themselves in the most critical and tragic position before the bureaucratic oligarchy" (p. 56). Thus, "in the face of such developments, Kurdish nationalism began to manifest itself" (p. 67).

However, of greater import is the PKK leader's theoretical framework for implementing a democratic nation that allows equal participation by all its citizens, as distinguished from a nation-state that permits only the dominant ethnic group to rule: "The desire to create a homogeneous, dominant nation is catastrophic. Each homogeneous nation is the result of the destruction of thou-

sands of cultural values” (p. 85).

Ocalan then argues that a new and more democratic Turkish constitution would help lead to such a democratic nation (Recently, Ergun Ozbudun, *The Constitutional System of Turkey: 1876 to the Present* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2011]), ably presented the case for a more democratic constitution that will correct for the current one’s overemphasis on an authoritarian, tutelary Turkish nation-state.) Ocalan also feels strongly that “we cannot ignore the Middle East’s leading cultural values. . . . Nor can we ignore the opportunities for finding a solution in them. . . . If we are to talk about a model for Turkey or the Middle East, . . . our priority should be to get rid of the ideological hegemony of the West” (pp. 24-25).

Ocalan blames a secretive organization called Gladio for much of the Kurds’ contemporary suffering: “Turkey joined NATO under U.S. hegemony. The United States ensured such protection through the operations of Gladio” (p. 50). “NATO’s Gladio is the real ruler” (p. 55). Although Ocalan never adequately defines this organization, it is known that Gladio was apparently a secret guerrilla group created and armed by the Turkish government with the help of the United States and NATO during the height of the Cold War. It was to be activated behind enemy lines if the Soviet Union ever occupied Turkey. Some have speculated that elements of Gladio were used by the Turkish government in the early 1990s in the extrajudicial murders of reputed PKK supporters and sympathizers. In my opinion, however, Ocalan overestimates Gladio’s supposed influence; the term simply becomes a catch word for Turkish denial of Kurdish rights.

What then is Ocalan’s road map for obtaining a solution to the Kurdish problem in Turkey? The listing in this book builds on the much longer one he originally issued in August 2003, “Road Map for a Peaceful and Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question in Turkey, Declaration of KADEK Executive Council.” During the first phase, “the PKK will declare a permanent no-action period” (p. 103). In the second phase, “a Truth and Reconciliation Commission should be established. . . [and] propose amnesty” (pp. 103-04). Then “when legal obstacles are removed, the PKK can withdraw its extralegal structures outside Turkey, under supervision of the United States, the European Union, the UN, the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government and the Republic of Turkey. . . . It is critical that the release of those detained and convicted of PKK activity and the withdrawal of PKK armed forces outside the borders be jointly planned” (p. 104).

Finally, during the third phase, “There will be no reason to resort to arms. . . . As the activities of the KCK gain legal status, the PKK will have no further need to engage in any activities within Turkey” (p. 104). In addition, “It is necessary that I [Ocalan] be released on the basis of a defense presented by me to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (p. 104). In a spirit of compromise, however, Ocalan adds, “I am certain that, on the basis of others’ thoughts and proposals, I will have to revise, change, and improve my own” (p. 105).

Ocalan’s road map suggests guidelines for a meaningful dialogue that should be taken up by the Turkish authorities, as indeed they had been until broken off during the summer of 2011. Once these negotiations are restarted, Turkey should stop calling the PKK (KCK) terrorist and trying to destroy it, and instead implicitly recognize it as a legitimate representative of the many disaffected Kurds in Turkey. This would then lead to a serious dialogue aimed at a negotiated peace. As Ocalan also mentions, the PKK then would be willing to stop its military struggle in return for true political and civil rights secured in a new democratic constitution for all Turkey’s citizens. (Reviews of previous books on related topics also written in prison by Ocalan were published in this journal in Fall 2007 and Fall 2011.)