

16.10.2015 Turkey on the brink of fascism

The attacks in Ankara, which left a hundred pro-Kurdish demonstrators dead, is more than an act of terrorism against an 'enemy society', like the twin towers attack of 11 September 2001 in New York or the Charlie Hebdo attack on 6 January in Paris. Because Turkey has reached a tipping point, and there is a serious risk that it will become once more - a century after the Armenian genocide and thirty years after the last military coup - a dictatorship, violent and corrupt, capable of generating the grimmest fascism at the very gates of Europe.

The Ankara attack should first be considered in the context of the conflict in Syria, because it bears the hallmarks of Daesh and its suicide fighters. It is the second attack using the same method, which consists of infiltrating a pro-Kurdish demonstration or meeting in order to unleash devastating slaughter.

But it is also the second attack that Daesh has not openly claimed, contrary to its usual practice, and it should also be placed in a Kurdish context, as they are once more the main victims. The Erdogan government has launched outright war on the Kurdish fighters of the PKK, and in the case of the previous attack in Suruç last July, though the suicide bomber was identified as a member of IS, Kurdish organisations were able to show that there had been complicity by the Turkish police. This complicity had enabled the bomber to arm himself and to penetrate the premises of a humanitarian organisation where he killed 36 activists. In reprisal, the PKK killed two policemen involved in the attack, and since then the tension between the PKK and the Turkish state apparatus has reached new heights.

The Turkish state apparatus has never been purged of the "deep state" which carried out the worst repression during the years of military dictatorship. This fascist organisation is deeply embedded in the police and the army, and it has widely established and proven offshoots in the Turkish mob, which is on the way to becoming one of the most powerful Mafia organisations in the world.

Because the Turkish mob is at the heart of the main money-laundering operations for Daesh, whose trafficking mainly takes place through Turkey. The sums involved are eye-watering: the Centre for Terrorism Analysis estimates that Daesh holds 2,000 billion euro, as much as the annual GDP in France! How have they amassed this fortune - which has increased by a further 200 billion euro in the last year alone - despite the war and the international coalition opposing them? By selling on the Turkish black market: oil, or art objects, or even cotton produced in the areas controlled by IS to the Turkish textile industry. When such sums are at stake, and it is obvious that their circulation depends on complicity at the very highest levels of the state, anything is possible.

The third worrying aspect of this background is the political situation in Turkey. The Turkish prime minister Erdogan is at once all-powerful and weakened. He has emerged as the "new sultan" of Turkey, and he is developing increasingly worrying delusions of grandeur. Corruption scandals erupt more and more often, and one of his excesses is particularly scandalous - the construction of a thousand-room palace for his personal residence in Ankara at a cost of at least 500 million euro at a time when the economic crisis is hitting Turkey hard. This excessive behaviour was punished in the June elections, and though he remains in power he has been unable to constitute a majority due to the breakthrough of the HDP, a party supported by Kurdish nationalists but which has also united most of the democratic opposition in Turkey, gaining 13% of the vote. The Turkish constitution set a threshold of 10% exactly to ensure that Kurdish representation would never enter parliament. This result by the HDP has weakened the power of Erdogan who, unable to control parliament with an absolute majority, has called new elections for 1 November next.

Since the election campaign began, air attacks on Kurdish fighters have intensified and suicide attacks, like last week's in Ankara, have been unleashed. The final weeks of campaigning are taking place in an

atmosphere of extreme tension and, if he fails in his planned anti-Kurdish plebiscite, what will Erdogan and the entourage surrounding him in power do? And if he wins, where will his authoritarian and oppressive excesses lead?

Islamic State on the immediate borders, the Turkish mob with protection in high places and trafficking massively with IS, Erdogan and his dreams of becoming a new Duce, and the 'deep state' feeding off corruption in the shadow of existing power: all this comes together to form a coalition of interests with enormous stakes in play. The worst could happen.