

# Soviets, Bulgaria pressure Turkey

by Konstantin George

The week leading up to the June 2 electoral victory of Andreas Papandreou in Greece, saw a severe escalation in Soviet and Soviet-orchestrated Bulgarian pressure on Turkey, the last remaining U.S. ally in the Eastern Mediterranean.

On May 31, the Soviets and the Bulgarians began joint air force maneuvers over Bulgaria. That same day, two Soviet and two Bulgarian warplanes flew in from the Black Sea over European Turkey, violating Turkish airspace, flew west, then northwest, flying over Turkey to the border, and back into Bulgaria. Emboldened by this show of support from Moscow and Bulgaria's Zhivkov, Papandreou delivered a June 1, pre-election tirade against Turkey.

The May 31 "incident" marked the climax of a week of Bulgarian provocations against Turkey. Starting on May 28, the Bulgarian police began imposing fines of between 1,500 and 3,000 deutschemarks to harass Turkish TIR (*Transport International Routièr*) truck drivers using Bulgarian transit routes. By Sunday, June 2, according to the Turkish newspapers *Milliyet* and *Hurriyet* of June 3, over 200 Turkish drivers had been fined, and about 100 were being held at the Bulgarian border customs post, pending payment.

Exact figures are hard to come by, but, from information culled in discussions with Turkish journalists and government officials, most were held for at least a week, and some from the first batch are still being held. According to the press, Bulgaria announced, as of June 1, that the transit time allowed for Turkish drivers had been reduced from 30 hours to 10 hours.

Also during Greek election weekend, the Bulgarian interior ministry imposed a police "siege" on the Turkish consulates at Plovdiv and Burgas. This shut them off from all outside contact, including visiting rights for Bulgaria's ethnic Turks.

These incidents are the clearest possible proof of the policy coordination existing between Papandreou, Bulgarian leader Zhivkov, and Moscow. Given Zhivkov's tight rein on Bulgarian policymaking, they were clearly planned well in advance, before his May 25 departure from Bulgaria. Zhivkov was out of Bulgaria from May 25 to June 6, on an extended Far East trip to Japan, North Korea, Mongolia,

finally arriving in the Soviet Union on June 3 in Novosibirsk, Siberia, before proceeding to Moscow, where he met with Gorbachov on June 6.

## Crisis sessions in Ankara

On Monday, June 3, the Turkish cabinet, chaired by President and former Armed Forces Commander in Chief General Kenan Evren, went into a special afternoon session. The two main items on the agenda were: The Greek election victory of Papandreou and the worsening crisis in Turkish-Bulgarian relations. After the meeting, Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, reflecting a national mood of being "fed up" with Papandreou's rhetoric and antics, answered Turkish press questions on Papandreou's June 1 diatribe: "If he doesn't change his behavior towards Turkey, then something could happen. He'll get from God, that which he deserves."

The session decided upon some Turkish counter-measures to the Bulgarian harassment, including; a search for alternatives to Bulgaria for Turkish commercial relations; placing Bulgarian consulates and TIR drivers in Turkey under close surveillance; expelling the Bulgarian Press Agency's (BTA) correspondent from Turkey; and halting all joint sports, cultural, and social activities. Other measures under consideration include halting the purchase of Bulgarian electricity, and even freezing all commercial ties with Bulgaria.

On the transit question, Turkey, having no hope of better relations with Greece, is stymied. In desperation, President Evren went to Romania on June 11 to meet with President Ceausescu to attempt to arrange Romanian transit facilities for Turkish cargo moving to Europe.

## Harassed on two fronts

Turkey is not only under pressure from Bulgaria and Greece on the "West," but, under increasing Soviet-sponsored pressure to the "East." For the past nine months, southeastern Turkey, bordering on Syria and Iraq, has been the scene of a Soviet-Syrian backed Kurdish separatist revolt. The Turkish government has admitted—understating the actual scale of trouble—that 38 soldiers, 50 civilians, and 65 armed Kurdish guerrillas have been killed so far.

That the revolt is growing was tacitly admitted on June 12 by Turkish Interior Minister Yildirim Akbulut. In an interview with *Milliyet*, he no longer referred to the Kurds as "bands," but as "guerrillas," and added: "They are in possession of AK-47 Kalashnikovs, grenade-launchers . . . well-organized. Therefore, I call them guerrillas. If one examines their arms and equipment, then one can only conclude that they are supported by one of our neighbors."

This marks the closest Turkey has come to directly naming the Soviet Union. Akbulut did name Soviet client Syria as providing support and sanctuary for the Kurds. Ugur Mumcu, *Cumhuriyet* writer and author of the first series in the Turkish media on the Bulgarian connection to Agca in the Papal assassination case, recently wrote that the Kurds and Armenian terrorists are trained in the same Syrian camps.